

חובות הלבבות • שער התשובה • פרק עשירי

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

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This chapter addresses the profound question of how one should approach repentance when it feels overwhelmingly difficult. The Chovos HaLevavos guides us through various scenarios, distinguishing between sins committed against Hashem and those against our fellow man. It offers practical and spiritual strategies for overcoming obstacles to teshuvah, emphasizing Hashem's boundless mercy and His readiness to assist those who sincerely strive to return to Him.

The chapter delves into specific cases, such as financial transgressions, physical harm, and even situations where the wronged party is unknown or has passed away. It reassures us that no matter the complexity of the sin, Hashem provides a path for atonement, often by facilitating the necessary steps for restitution and reconciliation. The author concludes with a powerful call to action, urging us to awaken from spiritual slumber and seize the opportunity for teshuvah while the gates of mercy are still open.

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

אבל איך אפן התחבולה למי שקשתה עליו התשובה?

But what strategy should one adopt if teshuvah is difficult for him?

נאמר בתשובת השאלה הזאת כי, מי שעבר עברה מן העברות שיקשה לתקנה באפן התשובה המיוחדת
בה אינה נמלטת מאחד משני דברים.

In answer to this question, we will say that one who has transgressed a sin for which it is difficult to rectify through its specific teshuvah, it must fall into one of two categories.

או שתהיה מן העברות שבינו ובין בוראו או שתהיה מן העברות שבינו ובין אדם כמו האונאה
והגנבה ומיני הגזלות והחמס והעול.

Either it is from the sins between him and his Creator, or it is from the sins between him and other people, such as overcharging, theft, various types of robbery, violence, and oppression.

ומאיוזה מהם שיהיה ותהיה התשובה נמנעת עליו לאחד מן הפנים שהקדמנו שהתשובה מהם קשה
כשיקבל עליו גדרי התשובה בכל תנאיה אשר בכחו ויכלתו מהם הבורא מקל עליו תשובתו ועובר לו
על מה שנעלם ממנו ונמנע עליו וישים לו מוצא קרוב מחטאו וירחיב אמתלאתו בו.

Whichever category it belongs to, if teshuvah is difficult for him due to one of the reasons we mentioned previously that make teshuvah hard, then, when he takes upon himself the requirements of teshuvah with all its conditions to the utmost of his power and ability, the Creator will make his teshuvah easier for him, and will forgive him for what is hidden from him and beyond his ability, and will provide him a swift way out of his sin and broaden his excuse in it.

וְאִם יִהְיֶה מִשְׁעַר הָעֲרִיּוֹת אֲשֶׁר זָכְרָנוּ בְּמִי שֶׁהוּלִיד מֵאֲסוּרָה יְכַרִּית הַבּוֹרָא אֶת זָרְעוֹ.

And if it is from the category of forbidden relations, which we mentioned regarding one who fathers a child from an illicit union, the Creator will cut off his offspring.

וְאִם הוּא מַצֵּד אֲנָאָה וְגוֹל בְּמִמּוֹנוֹ יִתֵּן לוֹ הָאֵל מָמוֹן וְיִפְרָעֵנוּ לְחֻבְרוֹ וְיִרְצָהוּ וְיִמְחַל לוֹ.

And if it is from overcharging or theft of money, Hashem will give him money, and he will repay his fellow and appease him, and he will forgive him.

וְאִם הֵרַע לְחֻבְרוֹ בְּגוּפוֹ אוֹ בְּמִמּוֹנוֹ יְכַנִּיס לוֹ הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבַּרְךָ בְּלִבּוֹ רָצוֹן וְאֶהְבֶּה עַד שִׁימְחַל לוֹ בְּמָה שֶׁהָיָה מִחֻטָּא עָלָיו כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר (מִשְׁלֵי טז) בְּרָצוֹת ה' דְּרַכִּי אִישׁ גַּם אוֹיְבָיו יִשְׁלַם אֹתוֹ.

And if he harmed his fellow physically or damaged his possessions, the blessed Creator will put favor and love in his fellow's heart until he forgives him for his sin against him, as it is written (Mishlei 16:7): "When Hashem favors a person's ways, He will cause even his enemies to make peace with him."

וְאִם יִרְחַק מִמֶּנּוּ הָעֹשִׂיוֹ יִזְמִין הַבּוֹרָא הַתְּקַבְּצָם עַד שֶׁיִּפְנֶעַ לְפָנָיו הָעוֹשֶׂק וְיִמְחַל לוֹ.

And if the oppressed person is far from him, the Creator will arrange their meeting until the oppressor humbles himself before him and he forgives him.

וְאִם לֹא יָדַע הָאֲנָשִׁים הָעֹשִׂוִּים וּמִסְפַּר הַמָּמוֹן אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂק יִפְיֵק אוֹתוֹ הָאֵל לְהוֹצִיא מִמּוֹנוֹ בְּתוֹעֵלוֹת כּוֹלָלוֹת כְּבִנְיָן גָּשֶׁר וְחִפּוֹר בְּאֵרוֹת יִהְיוּ מֵהֶם בְּנֵי אָדָם וַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹרוֹת בְּדֶרֶכִים שָׂאִין הַמִּים מְצוּיִים בָּהֶם וְמָה שֶׁדוּמָה לָזֶה מִתּוֹעֵלַת הַהֶמוֹן עַד שֶׁתִּהְיֶה תּוֹעֵלָתוֹ כּוֹלָלָת מִי שֶׁעָשָׂק וּמִי שֶׁלֹּא עָשָׂק.

And if he does not know the oppressed people or the amount of money he extorted, Hashem will enable him to spend his money on public benefits, such as building a bridge, digging wells for people to benefit from, or making cisterns on roads where water is scarce, and similar public welfare projects, until its benefit includes both those he oppressed and those he did not oppress.

וְאִם יָמוּת הָעֹשִׂיוֹ יֵשִׁיב הַמָּמוֹן לְיֹורְשָׁיו וְאִם הָיִק לוֹ בְּגוּפוֹ אוֹ שֶׁסְּפַר בְּגִנוּתוֹ יִתְנַדֵּה עַל קִבְרוֹ בְּזֶה בְּמַעֲמַד עֲשָׂרָה בְּנֵי אָדָם וְיִמְחַל לוֹ עוֹנוֹ כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ חֲזו"ל בְּעֵנֶן הַזֶּה מוֹלִיךְ עֲשָׂרָה ב"א וּמַעֲמִידֵם עַל קִבְרוֹ וְאוֹמַר חֲטָאתִי לַה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלִפְלוֹנִי זֶה שֶׁחִבַּלְתִּי בּוֹ.

And if the oppressed person dies, he should return the money to his heirs; and if he harmed him physically or spoke badly about him, he should confess at his grave in the presence of ten people, and his sin will be forgiven, as our Sages of blessed memory said regarding this matter: "He brings ten people and stands them by his grave and says: 'I have sinned against Hashem, the G-d of Israel, and against this person, whom I have harmed.'"

ואין התשובה נמנעת על החוטא אלא מצד מצפוננו ותרמית לבו אבל אם הוא רוצה להתקרב אל האלהים לא יסגר שער התשובה בפניו ולא ימנעו מהמגיע אליו מונע אף הוא פותח לו שער הישרה ומורה אותו הדרך הטובה בחסדו ובטובו כמ"ש (תהלים כה) טוב וישר ה' על כן יורה חטאים בדרך ואמר (דברים ד) ובקשתם משם את ה' אלהיך ומצאת וגו' וכתוב (שם ל) כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד ואמר (תהלים קמה) קרוב ה' לכל קראיו וגו'.

Teshuvah is not withheld from the sinner; rather, the obstruction comes from his own conscience and the deceit of his heart; but if he truly desires to draw near to Hashem, the gate of teshuvah will not be closed before him, and no obstacle will prevent him from reaching it. Rather, He will open for him the gate of righteousness and show him the good path in His kindness and goodness, as it is written (Tehillim 25:8): "Good and upright is Hashem; therefore He teaches sinners in the way"; and it says (Devarim 4:29): "From there you will seek Hashem your G-d, and you will find Him, etc."; and it is written (Devarim 30:14): "For the matter is very close to you"; and it says (Tehillim 145:18): "Hashem is close to all who call upon Him, etc."

וכבר בארתי לך אחי מחובות התשובה וגליתי לך מאפני החזרה מה שיש בו מענה עליך ונפסקו בו אמתלאותיה ומה תאמר מחר לאלהיך סכלתי ולא סכלת או תאמר עשיתי מה שעשיתי ואני יודע.

My brother, I have already clarified for you some of the obligations of teshuvah and revealed to you some of the ways of return, which leaves you with no excuse, and your pretexts are gone. What will you say tomorrow to your G-d? Will you say, "I was ignorant"? But you were not ignorant! Or will you say, "I did what I did, but I didn't know"?

ומה תהיה תשובת השאלה הזאת ומבלי ספק נהיה נשאלים.

What will be the answer to this question? And without a doubt, we will be asked.

הכן התשובה בעוד שמאריכין לך.

Prepare for teshuvah while they are still granting you time.

ידע אחי כי התשובה על זה איננה יוצאת כי אם ממעשינו לא מדברינו וחשב עם נפשך תגיע לרצון בוראך כי לא ישיג הטוב היום אלא הממהר אליו ופרי הקצור החרטה.

And know, my brother, that the answer to this will come only from our deeds, not from our words. Reflect with your soul how you can attain the favor of your Creator, for only one who hastens will achieve good today, and the fruit of procrastination is regret.

הקיצה אחי משנת פתייתך וחמל על נפשך שהיא הנכבדת שבפקדונות הבורא אצלך וכמה ועד מתי העכוב הזה וכבר כלית ימיה ברצון תאותך כאשר יעשה העבד הרע הלא תשוב לכלות שאר ימיה ברצון בוראך וכבר ידעת כי ימי האדם קצרים והשאר בלי ספק יותר קצר כמו שאמרו רז"ל היום קצר והמלאכה מרבה.

Wake up, my brother, from the slumber of your foolishness, and have mercy on your soul, which is the most honored of the Creator's deposits with you. How long, and until when, will this delay continue? You have already spent your days fulfilling your desires, like a wicked servant; will you not return to spend your remaining days fulfilling the will of your Creator? You already know that the days of man are short, and what remains is undoubtedly even shorter, as our Sages of blessed memory said: "The day is short and the work is great."

הִיָּתָה לָּךְ אַחֵי רוּחַ יִקְרָה וְנִכְבְּדָת כְּבֹדֶת בְּהָ הָעוֹלָם הַנִּכְבָּז וְהַכֹּלָה וְהַנִּחַת אַחֲרֵיתָהּ הַנִּשְׁאַרְתָּ לָּךְ הַלֹּא תִנְשָׂא רוּחָהּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַנִּכְבָּד וְהַמְעוֹן הָרָם מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִשְׁפֹּלְנָה הָרוּחוֹת הָעוֹלוֹת אֵלָיו לְעַד וְתִמְהָר בְּעוֹד שְׁעַר הַתְּשׁוּבָה פָּתוּחַ וְהַקְבָּלָה וְהַכְפָּרָה מְצוּיָה כַּמִּשְׁ"ש (ישעיהו נ"ה:ו') דְּרָשׁוּ ה' בְּהִמָּצְאוֹ קְרָאֵהוּ בְּהִיוֹתוֹ קְרוֹב.

My brother, you have a precious and honored spirit, with which you have honored this contemptible and fleeting world, and you have neglected your enduring future. Will you not lift your spirit to that honored place and lofty abode, a place where the spirits that ascend to it will never be lowered from their exaltedness? And hasten while the gate of teshuvah is open and acceptance and atonement are still available, as it is written (Yeshayahu 55:6): "Seek Hashem while He is found; call to Him while He is near."

מְהֵרָה אַחֵי וּמְהֵרָה קָדָם בֹּא פִּחְדֶּךָ כִּי אֵינְךָ בְּטוּחַ בְּחַיֵּי יוֹם אֶחָד וְעַיִן לְנִפְשְׁךָ עַיִן שְׂאִיאוֹת לְכַמוֹד וְיִהְיֶה שְׂקוּל עִם שְׂכָלְךָ.

Hurry, my brother, and hasten before your dread comes, for you are not assured of even one more day of life. Examine your soul with a careful and weighed examination, as is fitting for one like you, and let it be balanced with your intellect.

וּמִי שְׂרוּצָה לְהִגִּיעַ לְרִצּוֹן בּוֹרְאוֹ יִכָּנֵס מִן הַפֶּתַח הַצָּר שֶׁיִּכְנָסוּ מִמֶּנּוּ הַחֲסִידִים הַסּוֹבְלִים וְכִלְנוּ גִּמְלוֹהָ הַטּוֹב וְלֹא יִגִּיעוּהוּ אֵלָּא הַמִּמְהָרִים אֵלָיו הָרָצִים עָדִיו כִּמוֹ שֶׁאָמְרוּ חַז"ל הוּא עוֹ כַּנִּמְר וְקַל כַּנֶּשֶׁר רָץ כַּצֵּבִי וְגַבּוֹר כַּאֲרִי לְעִשּׂוֹת רִצּוֹן אָבִיךָ שְׂבֻשָּׁמִים.

And whoever wishes to attain the favor of his Creator should enter through the narrow gate through which the suffering chassidim enter. All of us hope for good, but only those who hasten towards it, who run towards it, will reach it, as our Sages of blessed memory said: "Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and mighty as a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven."

וְאָמַר דָּוִד (תהלים קיט) חֲשַׁתִּי וְלֹא הִתְמַהֲמַתִּי.

And Dovid HaMelech said (Tehillim 119:60): "I hastened and did not delay to keep Your commandments."

חֲשַׁב עִם נַפְשְׁךָ וּבּוֹשׁ מִבּוֹרְאֶךָ שֶׁתִּתְנַהֵּג עִמּוֹ בְּמִדָּה שֶׁאֵינְךָ רוֹצֶה לְנִפְשְׁךָ לְהִתְנַהֵּג בְּהָ עִם נִכְרָא כְּמוֹד כִּי אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ כִּי כְּשֶׁתִּקְצִיף בְּעַל מַעְלָה קִטְנָה מֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּלָךְ עַל נַפְשְׁךָ אֵינְךָ מִתְעַכֵּב מִהַכְּנֹעַ לוֹ וְהִתְחַנֵּן אֵלָיו לְמַחֵל לָּךְ וּלְהַבְטִיחָהּ מַעֲנִשׁוֹ עִם חֲלָשְׁתּוֹ בְּזֶה כִּשְׁ"ש אִם יִקְצֹף עָלֶיךָ הַשֵּׁר וְכָל שָׂכֵן הַמָּלָךְ שֶׁתִּמְהָר לְבַקֵּשׁ מַחִילָתוֹ וְתַחֲשִׁיב בַּתְּשׁוּבָה אֵלָיו וּלְרִצּוֹתוֹ מִיִּרְאָתָהּ מַהֲרִית עֲנֵשׁוּ.

Reflect with your soul and be ashamed before your Creator that you would treat Him in a way you would not want to treat a fellow creature like yourself. For you know that if you angered even a minor official among the king's men, you would not delay humbling yourself to him and pleading with him to forgive you and assure you against his punishment, despite his weakness in this matter. How much more so if a minister were to be angry with you, and certainly if it were the king himself, you would hasten to seek his forgiveness, and quickly do teshuvah to him, and appease him out of fear of his swift punishment.

וּכְבֹּר יָדְעָתָּ חֲלָשְׁתּוֹ מַעֲשׂוֹת דְּבָר בְּלִתִּי גִזְרַת הַבּוֹרֵא כַּמִּשְׁ"ש הַחֲכָם (משלי כא) פִּלְגִי מִיָּם לֵב מְלֶךְ בֵּיד ה' עַל כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִחְפֹּץ יִטְנוּ עִם כָּלוֹת מַלְכוּתוֹ וּנְתִישֶׁת מִמֶּשְׁלָתוֹ וְהִתְחַלְקוּת לְבוֹ וְטִרְדָּתוֹ בְּקִצְתָּ הַדְּבָרִים מִקְצָתָם וְעַבּוֹר הַשְׂכָּחָה וְהַעֲלָמָה עָלָיו וְרַב מָה שֶׁנֶּעְלַם מִמֶּנּוּ מִן הַדְּבָרִים הַנִּרְאִים כִּשְׁ"ש הַנִּסְתָּרִים.

And you already know his weakness in doing anything without the decree of the Creator, as the wise man said (Mishlei 21:1): "The king's heart is like streams of water in the hand of Hashem; He turns it wherever He wishes," along with the transience of his kingdom, the uprooting of his rule, the division of his heart, his preoccupation with some matters over others, and the forgetfulness and concealment that affect him, and most of what is hidden from him even among visible things, let alone hidden ones.

ועם ידיעתך כל זה אינך מתאחר לבקש ממנו למחל עונך ולמהר אל מה שירצהו ויקבלהו ממך ואיך לא יבוש אחי מבוראנו המשקיף על הנסתר ועל הנגלה ממעשינו ומחשבותינו אשר לא תעבר עליו שכה ולא העלמה ולא יטרידהו דבר מדבר ואין מנוס מדינו ואין קץ למלכותו שנטה מעליו ונתאחר מהפנע לו ומשוב אליו ואין אנו יודעים את קצנו ותכלית מדת ימינו.

And with all this knowledge, you do not delay in asking Him to forgive your sin and hasten to what He desires and will accept from you. And how can we not be ashamed, my brother, before our Creator, who observes the hidden and the revealed of our deeds and thoughts, upon whom no forgetfulness or concealment passes, and whom nothing distracts from anything else? There is no escape from His judgment, and no end to His kingdom, that we should turn away from Him and delay humbling ourselves to Him and returning to Him, when we do not know the time of our end and the limit of our days.

ואלו היה אדם מזוהר אנשי קריה או אנשי מדינה ויאמר בני אדם היו נכונים לנסע לעוה"ב כי איש אחד יפקד מכם בחדש הזה ואינני מודיע אותו (ס"א ואינני יודע אותו).

And if a person were to warn the people of a town or a country and say, "People, be ready to depart for the World to Come, for one person among you will be taken this month, and I will not make him known (or, 'I do not know him')."

האין מן הדין על כל אחד מהם שיהיה נכון למות מיראה שפא יהיה הוא האיש ההוא?

Would it not be proper for each of them to be ready to die out of fear that he might be that person?

ואיך לא נהיה כלנו נכונים לו! ואנחנו רואים כי המות בכל חודש מכלה מספר רב מן החיים הלא מן הדין עלינו שנירא על נפשותינו בכל חודש ונחשב על ענייננו וצידתנו ובית מועדנו קדם את הצורך אליהם אפלו יום אחד כמו שאמרו ז"ל שוב יום אחד לפני מיתתו ונאמר (קהלת ט"ח') בכל את יהיו בגדיה לבנים.

And how can we all not be ready for it? And we see that death consumes a great number of the living every month. Is it not proper for us to fear for our souls every month and to consider our affairs, our provisions, and our appointed home even one day before they are needed, as our Sages of blessed memory said: "Repent one day before your death," and it is said (Koheles 9:8): "At all times let your garments be white"?

בחן ביתרון שכלה והכרתה ברור זה במה שאתה רואה בעיניך בברור מה שיגיד לך זולתה.

Examine this clarification with your superior intellect and understanding, based on what you clearly see with your own eyes, more than what others might tell you.

ואל תדחה שכלה ובינתה כי כבר נאמר כי לבורא יתברך על עבדיו טובות אם יקבלו אותם ינוחו בם (ס"א ירווחו בם) ואם ישיבום עליו יהיו לטענות עליהם ואח"כ ישובו לנקמה.

And do not push away your intellect and understanding, for it has already been said that the blessed Creator has bestowed goodness upon His servants; if they accept them, they will find rest in them (or, 'they will be relieved by them'), but if they reject them, they will become claims against them, and afterwards, they will turn into vengeance.

והבורא יתברך הטיב לך בחכמה ובתבונה ובדעת שם לך בהם יתרון על זולתה הזהר והזהר שלא ישובו לטענה עליה.

And the blessed Creator has favored you with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, giving you an advantage over others through them. Be very careful that they do not turn into a claim against you.

וּכְבֹּר הָעִיר אוֹתָהּ אֶל הַדֶּרֶךְ הַיְשָׁרָה וְהוֹרָה אוֹתָהּ נְתִיב טוֹבָתָהּ וּלְחַמְלָה עָלֶיהָ וּלְנִהְלָה לֹאט וְלֹא רָצָה לָהּ שְׁתַּתְמִיד עַל פְּתִיּוֹתָהּ וּתְחִיזִיק בְּמַרְיָהּ לְלַכֵּת עִמָּהּ עַל דֶּרֶךְ הַחֶסֶד אֲשֶׁר יָאוֹת לוֹ וּבְחַמְלָתוֹ וּרְחֻמּוֹ עַל בְּרוּאָיו כַּמִּשָּׁל (תהלים כה) טוֹב וְיָשָׁר ה' עַל כֵּן יוֹרָה חַטָּאִים בְּדֶרֶךְ וּכְבֹּר קָרָא אוֹתָהּ לֹאט וּבְלִשׁוֹן רַבָּה וְאַחֵר כֶּה בְּתוֹכָהּ וְהַכְלָמָה וְאַחֵר כֶּה הִזְהִיר אוֹתָהּ בְּעִנְשׁוֹ כִּדְרֵי שְׁתָּשׁוּב אֵלָיו וּתְמַהֵר לְחֹזֵר עֲדָיו.

And He has already awakened you to the straight path and shown you the way of your good, and out of compassion for you, He has led you gently. He did not want you to persist in your foolishness and cling to your rebellion, but rather to deal with you in the way of kindness that is fitting for Him, and with His compassion and mercy for His creations, as it is written (Tehillim 25:8): "Good and upright is Hashem; therefore He teaches sinners in the way." And He has already called you gently and with soft language, and afterwards with rebuke and shame, and afterwards He warned you with His punishment, so that you would return to Him and hasten to come back to Him.

מַהֵר אָחִי וּמַהֵר לְהִאָּזֵן אֵלָיו וְלִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹלוֹ וּלְדַבְּקָהּ בּוֹ וּבַחֵר לְנַפְשְׁךָ מָה שְׁפָחַר לָהּ אֱלֹהֶיהָ וּרְצָה לָהּ מָה שְׁרָצָה מִמֶּנָּה בּוֹרְאָהּ, וְאַל תְּבִיאָהּ הָעֲצָלָה לְהַקְלִי בָּהּ כִּי אִם תַּקַּל נַפְשְׁךָ בְּעִינֶיהָ אֵיזָה דְּבַר יִהְיֶה נִכְבָּד אֲצִלָּהּ.

Hurry, my brother, and hasten to listen to Him, to hear His voice, and to cling to Him. Choose for your soul what your G-d has chosen for it, and what your Creator desires from it. And do not let laziness lead you to treat it lightly, for if your soul is light in your eyes, what thing will be honored by you?

וְהִזְהֵר פֶּן יִשְׁיָאֵךְ הִרְהוּר לְבָבְךָ וַיֹּאמֶר לָךְ עֲתָה אַחֲרֵי אֲרָךְ הִתְעַלְמוֹתִי וְחָלִיפוֹת רַב יָמֵי אָשׁוּב אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶבְקֶשׁ מַחִילָתוֹ.

And be careful lest the thoughts of your heart deceive you and tell you: "Now, after a long period of my neglect and the passing of most of my days, I will return to Hashem and seek His forgiveness."

וְרֹאוּי שְׁתָּשׁוּב עָלָיו בְּמָה שְׁאָמַר הַנְּבִיא בְּעִנְיָן הַזֶּה (יחזקאל יח) וּבְשׁוּב רָשָׁע מִרְשָׁעָתוֹ וּבְשׁוּב צַדִּיק מִצְדֻקָּתוֹ עַד סוֹף הָעִנְיָן.

And it is proper that you respond to it with what the prophet said regarding this matter (Yechezkel 18): "And when a wicked person turns away from his wickedness, and when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness," until the end of the passage.

וּכְבֹּר הַמְּשִׁילוֹ זֶה הַקְדָּמוֹנִים לְאָדָם שֶׁהָיוּ בְּיָדוֹ דִּרְכָּמוֹנֵי כֶּסֶף וְהָיָה צָרִיךְ לַעֲכֹר בְּנֶהֱרָה גָּדוֹל וְכֹאֲשֶׁר עָמַד עַל שִׁפְתֵי הַנָּהָר הַשְּׁלִיךְ הַדֶּרֶךְ

And the early Sages already compared this to a person who had silver coins in his hand and needed to cross a great river. And when he stood on the bank of the river, he threw the coins...

WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

Shaar HaTeshuvah, Chapter Ten, outlines the strategy for repentance when it is difficult, categorizing sins as either between man and Hashem or between man and his fellow. The author assures us that if one sincerely commits to teshuvah to the best of their ability, Hashem will ease the process and provide solutions for seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Specific examples are given: for illicit relations, Hashem will cut off the manzer's descendants; for monetary theft, Hashem will provide funds for restitution; for physical harm, Hashem will soften the victim's heart. If the wronged party is distant, Hashem will arrange a meeting. If the number of victims or amount stolen is unknown, one should engage in public good works. If the wronged party has died, restitution goes to heirs, and for physical or verbal harm, confession at the grave with a minyan is prescribed.

The chapter emphasizes that repentance is always accessible, with Hashem opening the path for those who truly seek Him. It concludes with a heartfelt exhortation to hasten teshuvah, reminding us of life's brevity and the importance of prioritizing our spiritual end over fleeting worldly desires, while the gates of repentance remain open.

למעשה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

My dear brother, the Chovos HaLevavos here gives us such a powerful chiddush: even when teshuvah seems impossible, when the obstacles are so great, Hashem Himself will help us! If you stole and don't have the money to pay back, He will give it to you. If the person you wronged is far away, He will arrange for you to meet. If you don't even know who you wronged, He will guide you to do a public good that will atone. Even if the person passed away, there is a path. The message is clear: there is **always** a way back, because Hashem wants us to return.

This teaches us a fundamental truth about Hashem's chessed. He doesn't just command us to do teshuvah; He actively helps us fulfill it, especially when it feels overwhelming. Our job is to take the first step, to genuinely desire to return, and to do whatever is in our power. Once we commit, Hashem opens the gates and smooths the path, making the seemingly impossible, possible. He is "Tov v'Yashar Hashem, al kein yoreh chata'im ba'derech" – Good and upright is Hashem, therefore He teaches sinners the way.

So often, the yetzer hara whispers, "It's too hard. You can't fix this. It's too late." But the Chovos HaLevavos tells us this is a lie, a trick of our own hearts. Hashem never closes the door. He is always close to those who call upon Him in truth. Our only real obstacle is our own procrastination and lack of resolve.

Today, let's take to heart that no matter how difficult a teshuvah might seem, Hashem is waiting to help us. Choose one area where you've been putting off teshuvah because it felt too hard, and take one concrete step towards it, trusting that Hashem will clear the path for the rest.