

הלכות תשובה • פרק ראשון

Complete Word-for-Word Interlinear • Navy & Gold Edition

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this opening perek of Hilchos Teshuvah, the Rambam introduces us to the beautiful and essential mitzvah of Teshuvah, showing us how Hashem in His infinite mercy always leaves the door open for us to return to Him. We will learn that the very heart of this mitzvah is Vidui—verbal confession—which is required for any sin we commit, whether it was done on purpose or by accident, and even when bringing a korban or receiving a court-imposed punishment.

The perek also guides us through the different ways Hashem grants us atonement, from the special avodah of the Se'ir HaMishdalech (the scapegoat) on Yom Kippur during the times of the Beis HaMikdash, to the power of Teshuvah in our own times when we no longer have the Mizbe'ach. We will see how the process of cleansing our neshama depends on the severity of the transgression, showing us the path to complete forgiveness.

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

ה'א

מצות עשה של ודוי דברים בתשובה

Halacha 1 • The Positive Commandment of Verbal Confession as Part of Repentance

כל מצות שבתורה בין עשה בין לא תעשה אם עבר אדם
a person transgresses if command a negative or a positive command whether of the Torah mitzvot All

על אחת מהן בין בזדון בין בשגגה כשיעשה תשובה וישוב מחטאו
from his sin and returns repentance when he performs inadvertently or willfully whether of them one .

חיב להתודות לפני האל ברוך הוא שנאמר במדבר ה ו "איש או
or a man 6 5 Bamidbar as it is said is He blessed God before to confess he is obligated

אשה כי יעשו וגו' במדבר ה ז "והתודו את חטאתם אשר
which their sin — and they shall confess 7 5 Bamidbar etc. they commit when a woman

עשו" זה ודוי דברים. ודוי זה מצות עשה. כיצד מתודין. אומר
he says does one confess how positive is a mitzvah this confession of words is confession this they committed

אנא השם חטאתי עויתי פשעתי לפניך ועשיתי כך וכך והרי
and behold and such such and I did before You I rebelled I transgressed I sinned Hashem I implore You

נחמתי ובשתי במעשי ולעולם איני חוזר לדבר זה. וזהו עקרו
the essence and this is this to thing return I will not and forever by my deeds and am embarrassed I regret

של ודוי. וכל המרבה להתודות ומאריך בענין זה הרי זה משבח.
is praiseworthy this behold this on matter and elaborates to confess increases and whoever confession of

וכן בעלי חטאות ואשמות בעת שמביאין קרבנותיהן על
for their sacrifices that they bring at the time and guilt offerings sin offerings those obligated in and likewise

שִׁגְגָתוֹ אוֹ עַל זְדוּוֹנָם אֵין מִתְכַּפֵּר לָהֶן בְּקִרְבָּנָם עַד
their inadvertent transgression or their willful transgression do not attain atonement for themselves with their sacrifice until

שִׁיעֲשׂוּ תְּשׁוּבָה וְיִתְּנוּ דְּבָרִים שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא ה' ה' "וְהִתְוֹדָה אֲשֶׁר
they perform repentance and confess of words confession and confess that and he shall confess 5 5 Vayikra as it is said

חָטָא עָלֶיהָ". וְכֵן כָּל מַחֲיָבֵי מִיתוֹת בֵּית דִּין וּמַחֲיָבֵי מַלְקוֹת אֵין
he sinned upon it all and likewise those liable to deaths of those liable to lashes and those liable to Din Beis do not

מִתְכַּפֵּר לָהֶן בְּמִיתָתָן אוֹ בְּלִקְיָתָן עַד שִׁיעֲשׂוּ תְּשׁוּבָה וְיִתְּנוּ.
attain atonement for themselves through their death or through their lashes and confess repentance they perform until

וְכֵן הַחֹבֵל בְּחֵבְרוֹ וְהַמְזִיק מִמוֹנוֹ אֶף עַל פִּי שִׁשְׁלָם לוֹ מָה
and likewise one who injures his fellow and one who damages his property even though what him he paid

שֶׁהוּא חַיֵּב לוֹ אֵינוֹ מִתְכַּפֵּר עַד שִׁיתְּוֹדָה וְיָשׁוּב מַלְעָשׂוֹת כְּזֶה
that he is obligated to him does not attain atonement until he confesses and returns from doing like this

לְעוֹלָם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בַּמִּדְבָּר ה' ו' "מִכָּל חַטָּאת הָאָדָם":
as it is said ever 6 5 Bamidbar from all sins of man

This halacha establishes that verbal confession is a positive commandment required for any transgression, and that sacrifices, court punishments, or monetary restitution do not achieve atonement without repentance and confession.

ה"ב

פְּרַת שְׂעִיר הַמִּשְׁתַּלַּח וְהַחֲלוּק בֵּין עֲבֻרוֹת קְלוֹת לְחִמּוּרוֹת

Halacha 2 · Atonement of the Scapegoat and the Distinction Between Light and Severe Transgressions

שְׂעִיר הַמִּשְׁתַּלַּח לְפִי שֶׁהוּא כֹפֵּר עַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל מִתְוֹדָה
The goat that is sent it is since for an atonement all of Yisrael confesses Gadol the Kohen

עָלָיו עַל לְשׁוֹן כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא טו כ"א "וְהִתְוֹדָה עָלָיו אֶת
— upon it "And he shall confess 21 16 Vayikra as it is said Yisrael all of the tongue of on

כָּל עֲוֹנוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל". שְׂעִיר הַמִּשְׁתַּלַּח מְכַפֵּר עַל כָּל עֲבֻרוֹת
all of the iniquities of the children of Yisrael" The goat that is sent atones for all transgressions

שֶׁבִּתְּוָרָה, הַקְּלוֹת וְהַחֲמֻרוֹת, בֵּין שְׂעֵבֶר בְּזָדוֹן בֵּין שְׂעֵבֶר
in the Torah the light and the severe whether that he transgressed whether intentionally that he transgressed

בְּשִׁגְגָה, בֵּין שֶׁהוּדַע לוֹ בֵּין שֶׁלֹּא הוּדַע לוֹ, הַכֹּל מִתְכַּפֵּר
whether inadvertently to him that it became known whether to him that not whether it became known to him everything is atoned for

בְּשְׂעִיר הַמִּשְׁתַּלַּח. וְהוּא שֶׁעָשָׂה תְּשׁוּבָה. אֲבָל אִם לֹא עָשָׂה תְּשׁוּבָה
by the goat that is sent and this is teshuvah provided that he made teshuvah he made not if but

אֵין הַשְׂעִיר מְכַפֵּר לוֹ אֲלָא עַל הַקְּלוֹת. וּמָה הֵן הַקְּלוֹת וּמָה הֵן
the goat does not atone for him except for the light ones And what the light ones are and what

הַחֲמֻרוֹת. הַחֲמֻרוֹת הֵן שֶׁחַיֵּבֵין עֲלֵיהֶם מִיתַת בֵּית דִּין אוֹ כְּרֵת.
The severe ones the severe ones are those that one is liable for them death of the court or of law karet

וּשְׁבוּעַת שְׁוֹא וְשֹׁקֵר אֵף עַל פִּי שְׂאִין בָּהֶן כָּרַת הָרִי הֵן מִן
are among they behold karet in them that there is not though · even and falsehood vanity and an oath of
הַחֲמוּרוֹת. וְשָׂאֵר מִצְוֹת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה וּמִצְוֹת עֲשֶׂה שְׂאִין
that there is not do and commandments of not do commandments of And the rest of the severe ones
בָּהֶן כָּרַת הֵם הַקִּלּוֹת:
the light ones they are karet in them

This halacha explains how the scapegoat on Yom Kippur atones for all sins when accompanied by teshuvah, and defines light versus severe transgressions.

ה'ל"ג

כְּפָרַת הַתְּשׁוּבָה וְיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים בְּזִמְנָהּ

Halacha 3 · The Power of Teshuvah and Yom Kippur to Atone in the Absence of the Temple

בְּזִמְנָהּ הַזֶּה שְׂאִין בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ קָיָם וְאִין לָנוּ מִזְבֵּחַ כְּפָרָה
atonement an altar of for us and there is not standing the Sanctuary the House of that there is not this At the time
אִין שָׁם אֵלָּא תְּשׁוּבָה. הַתְּשׁוּבָה מְכַפֶּרֶת עַל כָּל הָעֲבֻרוֹת. אֲפֹלוּ
even the transgressions all for atones the teshuvah teshuvah nothing but there there is
רָשָׁע כָּל יָמָיו וַעֲשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה בְּאַחֲרוֹנָה אִין מְזַכְּרִין לוֹ שׁוּם דָּבָר
thing any to him mention we do not at the end teshuvah and he made his days all a wicked person
מִרְשָׁעוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר יִחְזָקָאֵל לֵג יב "רָשָׁעַת הָרָשָׁע לֹא יִכָּשֵׁל בָּהּ
in it will stumble not the wicked the wickedness of 12 33 Yechezkel as it is said from his wickedness
בְּיוֹם שׁוּבוֹ מִרְשָׁעוֹ". וְעֵצְמוֹ שֶׁל יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר לְשׁוֹבִים
for those who return atones Kippur Yom of and the essence from his wickedness his return on the day of
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וַיִּקְרָא טַז ל "כִּי בְּיוֹם הַזֶּה יִכָּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם":
for you it will atone this on the day for 30 16 Vayikra as it is said

This halacha teaches that in the absence of the Beis HaMikdash and sacrifices, teshuvah alone has the power to erase all sins, even for a lifelong sinner who repents at the end of his life.

ה'ל"ד

חֲלוּקֵי כְּפָרָה לְעֲבֻרוֹת שׁוֹנוֹת

Halacha 4 · The Four Categories of Atonement for Different Transgressions

אֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁהַתְּשׁוּבָה מְכַפֶּרֶת עַל הַכָּל וְעֵצְמוֹ שֶׁל יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים
Kippur Yom of and the essence everything for atones that repentance though · Even
מְכַפֵּר. יֵשׁ עֲבֻרוֹת שֶׁהֵן מְתַכַּפְּרִים לְשָׁעָתָן וַיֵּשׁ עֲבֻרוֹת שְׂאִין
that are not sins and there are immediately are atoned that they sins there are atones
מְתַכַּפְּרִים אֲלָא לְאַחֵר זְמַן. כִּי־כֵן עָבַר אָדָם עַל מִצְוֹת עֲשֶׂה
positive a commandment · a person transgressed How so time after except atoned
שְׂאִין בָּהֶן כָּרַת וַעֲשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה אִינוֹ זֶה מִשָּׁם עַד שְׁמוּחָלִין לוֹ,
him that they forgive until from there move he does not repentance and he did karet in it that there is not
וּבֵאלוֹ נֶאֱמַר יִרְמְיָה ג כב "שׁוּבוּ בָנִים שׁוֹכְבִים אֶרְפָּה מְשׁוּבְתֵיכֶם"
your rebelliousness I will heal rebellious children Return 22 3 Yirmeyahu it is said and regarding these

וְגו'. עָבַר עַל מִצְוֹת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה שְׂאִין בָּהּ כָּרַת וְלֹא מִיתַת בֵּית

court death of and not karet in it that there is not do not a commandment · transgressed etc.

דִּין וְעָשָׂה תְּשׁוּבָה, תְּשׁוּבָה תּוֹלָה יוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים מְכַפֵּר, וּבָאֵלוּ נֶאֱמַר

it is said and regarding these atones Kippur and Yom suspends repentance repentance and he did ·

וַיִּקְרָא טַז ל "כִּי בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכָּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם". עָבַר עַל כְּרַתוֹת וּמִיתוֹת

and deaths of sins of karet · transgressed for you it will atone this on the day For 30 16 Vayikra

בֵּית דִּין וְעָשָׂה תְּשׁוּבָה, תְּשׁוּבָה יוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים תּוֹלִין וְיִסּוּרִין הַבָּאִין

that come and sufferings suspend Kippur and Yom repentance repentance and he did · court

עָלָיו גּוֹמְרִין לוֹ הַכְּפָרָה. וְלַעוֹלָם אֵין מְתַכַּפֵּר לוֹ כְּפָרָה גְּמוּרָה עַד

until complete atonement for him is atoned not and forever the atonement for him complete upon him

שְׂיָבוֹאוּ עָלָיו יִסּוּרִין, וּבָאֵלוּ נֶאֱמַר תְּהִלִּים פֶּט לַג "וּפָקַדְתִּי

And I will punish 33 89 Tehillim it is said and regarding these sufferings upon him that there come

כְּשֶׁבֶט פִּשְׁעָם וּבִנְגָעִים עֲוֹנָם". בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אֲמוּרִים בְּשָׁלָא חִלַּל

he desecrated in that not are said words In what their iniquity and with plagues their transgression with a rod

אֶת הַשֵּׁם בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁעָבַר אֲכַל הַמַּחֲלֵל אֶת הַשֵּׁם אַף עַל פִּי

though · even the Name — one who desecrates but that he transgressed at the time the Name —

שֶׁעָשָׂה תְּשׁוּבָה וְהִגִּיעַ יוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים וְהוּא עוֹמֵד בְּתְשׁוּבָתוֹ וּבָאוּ עָלָיו

upon him and there came in his repentance stands and he Kippur Yom and arrived repentance that he did

יִסּוּרִין אֵינוֹ מְתַכַּפֵּר לוֹ כְּפָרָה גְּמוּרָה עַד שְׂיָמוּת. אֲלֹא תְּשׁוּבָה יוֹם

Yom repentance rather that he dies until complete atonement for him atoned he is not sufferings

הַכְּפוּרִים וְיִסּוּרִין שְׁלֹשָׁתָן תּוֹלִין וּמִיתָה מְכַפֶּרֶת שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר יִשְׁעִיה כֹּב יָד

14 22 Yeshayahu as it is said atones and death suspend the three of them and sufferings Kippur

"וְנִגְלָה בְּאָזְנִי ה' צְבָאוֹת וְגו' אִם יִכָּפֵּר הָעוֹן הַזֶּה לָכֶם עַד

until to you this the iniquity will be atoned if etc. of Hosts Hashem in my ears And it was revealed

תָּמִתוּן":

you die

This halacha outlines the four categories of atonement formulated by Rabbi Yishmael, detailing how different levels of sin require different combinations of repentance, Yom Kippur, suffering, and death to achieve complete forgiveness.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Rambam begins by establishing that Vidui is a positive mitzvah of the Torah, outlining its essential text of regret, shame, and a firm commitment never to repeat the sin. He explains that sacrifices, court punishments, and even financial restitution do not bring atonement without sincere Teshuvah and Vidui. The chapter then details the unique power of the Se'ir HaMishtaleach on Yom Kippur to atone for various sins, and emphasizes that today, in the absence of the Beis HaMikdash, Teshuvah alone is what atones for all transgressions. Finally, the Rambam categorizes the four pathways of atonement, explaining how Teshuvah, Yom Kippur, suffering, and ultimately death work together to fully cleanse a person depending on the severity of the sin, culminating in the gravity of Chilul Hashem.

The central chiddush of this sugya is that teshuvah is never just a feeling in the heart; it requires "vidui devarim", the actual verbal confession of our mistakes before Hashem. The Rambam teaches us that even if a person brings a korban, pays back money they owe, or undergoes court-ordered punishment, their atonement is not complete until they physically speak the words of confession. There is a unique spiritual power in taking our vague feelings of regret and shaping them into clear, spoken words before Hashem.

When we keep our mistakes locked inside our minds, they remain blurry, and the yetzer hara can easily make us forget them or rationalize them away. By speaking them out loud in private prayer, we bring them into reality, which forces us to take true responsibility. The Torah gives us a simple, beautiful formula for this avodah: we state what we did, we express our sincere regret and embarrassment, and we resolve to do better. This verbal release is where the healing of the neshama truly begins.

Today, take two minutes to stand in a quiet corner alone with Hashem. Speak out loud, in your own words, one specific mistake you made recently, express your regret, and ask Hashem for the strength to do better next time.