

הלכות תשובה • פרק רביעי

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

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this chapter, the Rambam takes us through a vital and sobering discussion of the twenty-four deeds that hold a person back from making Teshuvah. Hashem, in His infinite mercy, always desires our return, but there are certain severe transgressions and bad habits that block our path, making it incredibly difficult to find the way back. We will learn about the sins that are so grave that Hashem does not help the sinner repent, and those that lock the gates of Teshuvah before him.

We will also explore the practical and interpersonal hurdles to Teshuvah, such as sins between man and his fellow where the victim cannot be identified, and those subtle, everyday missteps that people tend to treat lightly. Through this, the Rambam teaches us the absolute necessity of accepting rebuke and staying connected to the community and our Chachamim, showing us how to avoid the spiritual traps of the yetzer hara.

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

ה'א

עשרים וארבעה דברים המעכבין את התשובה

Halacha 1 • Twenty-Four Deeds That Prevent a Person From Achieving Complete Teshuvah

ארבעה ועשרים דברים מעכבין את התשובה. ארבעה מהן עון גדול
great are a sin of them four Teshuvah — hold back things and four Twenty

והעושה אחד מהן אין הקדוש ברוך הוא מספיק בידו לעשות
to perform in his hand provide is He Blessed the Holy One does not of them one and one who does

תשובה לפי גדל חטאו. ואלו הן. א המחטיא את הרבים
the many — one who causes to sin 1 are they and these his sin the greatness of because of Teshuvah

ובכלל עון זה המעכב את הרבים מלעשות מצוה.
2 a mitzvah from performing the many — is one who holds back this sin and in the category of

והמטה את חברו מדרך טובה לרעה כגון מסית ומדיח.
3 and one who misleads one who incites such as to bad good from a path his fellow — and one who turns

הרואה בנו יוצא לתרבות רעה ואינו ממחה בידו. הואיל ובנו
and his son since against him protest and does not bad to culture going out his son one who sees

ברשותו אלו מחה בו היתה פורש ונמצא כמחטיאו.
as if he caused him to and it turns out separated he would have against him he had protested if is in his domain
sin

ובכלל עון זה כל שאפשר בידו למחות באחרים בין יחיד
an individual whether against others to protest in his hand that it is possible is anyone this sin and in the category of

בין רבים ולא מכה אלא יניחם בכשלונם. ד והאומר אחטא

I will sin and one who says 4 in their stumbling leaves them but protest and did not many whether

ואשוב ובכלל זה האומר אחטא ויום הכפורים מכפר:

will atone Kippur and Yom I will sin is one who says this and in the category of and I will return

The Rambam lists the first four of twenty-four severe obstacles to repentance, including causing others to sin and planning to sin with the intent of repenting later.

ה"ב

חמשה דברים הנועלים דרכי התשובה בפני עושיהן

Halacha 2 • Five Deeds That Lock the Paths of Repentance Before Those Who Commit Them

ומהן חמשה דברים הנועלים דרכי התשובה בפני עושיהן. ואלו

and these their doers before repentance the paths of that lock things are five And from them

הן. א הפורש מן הצבור, לפי שבזמן שיעשו תשובה לא יהיה

will he be not repentance that they do that at the time because the community from He who separates 1 are they

עמהן ואינו זוכה עמהן בזכות שעושין. ב והחולק על דברי

the words of against And he who argues 2 that they do in the merit with them meriting and he is not with them

חכמים, לפי שמחלקתו גורמת לו לפרש מהן ואינו יודע דרכי

the paths of know and he does not from them to separate him causes that his dispute because Sages

התשובה. ג והמלעיג על המצות, שפיון שנתבזו בעיניו אינו

he does not in his eyes that they are degraded since the mitzvos at And he who scoffs 3 repentance

רודף אחריהן ולא עושן ואם לא יעשה במה יזכה. ד והמבזה

And he who demeans 4 will he merit with what he performs not and if perform them and not after them pursue

רבותיו, שדבר זה גורם לו לדחפו ולטרדו פגיתיו ובזמן

and at the time like Gechazi and to banish him to push him away him causes this for this thing his teachers

שנטרד לא ימצא מלמד ומורה לו דרך האמת. ה והשונא את

— And he who hates 5 the truth the path of for him and guide a teacher will he find not that he is banished

התוכחות שהרי לא הניח לו דרך תשובה. שהתוכחה גורמת

causes for the admonishment repentance a path of for himself has he left not for behold the admonishments

לתשובה שבזמן שמודיעין לו לאדם חטאיו ומכלימין אותו חוזר

he returns him and shame his sins to a person to him that they make known for at the time repentance

בתשובה כמו שכתוב בתורה דברים ט ז "זכר ו אל תשכח". דברים

Devarim forget do not and Remember 7 9 Devarim in the Torah that is written like in repentance

ט ז "ממרים הייתם". דברים כט ג "ולא נתן ה' לכם לב". דברים לב

32 Devarim a heart to you Hashem gave And not 3 29 Devarim you have been rebellious 7 9

ו "עם נבל ולא חכם". וכן ישעיהו הוכיח את ישראל ואמר ישעיה א ד

4 1 Yeshayahu and said Yisrael — rebuked Yeshayahu And so wise and not vile a nation 6

"הוֹי גוֹי חַטָּא". יִשְׁעִיָּה א ג "יָדַע שׁוֹר קָנָהוּ". יִשְׁעִיָּה מֵח ד "מִדַּעְתִּי כִּי
 that From my knowing 4 48 Yeshayahu its owner an ox Knows 3 1 Yeshayahu sinful nation Woe
 קָשָׁה אֶתָּה". וְכֵן צָוָהוּ הָאֵל לְהוֹכִיחַ לַחַטָּאִים שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר יִשְׁעִיָּה נֵח
 58 Yeshayahu as it is said the sinners to rebuke the Almighty commanded him And so are you obstinate
 א "קְרָא בְּגֵרוֹן אֵל תַּחֲשֹׁךְ". וְכֵן כָּל הַנְּבִיאִים הוֹכִיחוּ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַד
 until Yisrael rebuked the prophets all And so spare do not with throat Call 1
 שָׁחֲזָרוּ בַּתְּשׁוּבָה. לְפִיכָךְ צָרִיךְ לְהַעֲמִיד בְּכָל קָהָל וְקָהָל
 and congregation congregation in every to appoint it is necessary Therefore in repentance that they returned
 מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל חָכָם גָּדוֹל וְזָקֵן וִירָא שָׁמַיִם מִנְּעוּרָיו וְאֱהוֹב לָהֶם שְׂיָהָא
 who will be by them and beloved from his youth Heaven and fearing of and elderly great a sage of Yisrael
 מוֹכִיחַ לְרַבִּים וּמַחְזִירָן בַּתְּשׁוּבָה, וְזֶה שֶׁשׁוֹנֵא אֶת הַתּוֹכָחוֹת
 the admonishments — who hates And this one in repentance and returning them the masses admonishing
 אֵינוֹ בָּא לְמוֹכִיחַ וְלֹא שׁוֹמַע דְּבָרָיו לְפִיכָךְ יַעֲמֵד בַּחֲטָאֵתָיו
 in his sins he will stand therefore his words hears and not to the admonisher come he does not
 שֶׁהֵם בְּעֵינָיו טוֹבִים:
 good in his eyes which they are

This halacha details five specific transgressions, such as separating from the community or hating rebuke, which prevent a person from finding the path to repentance.

ה'ל"ג

חֲמִשָּׁה עֲוֹנוֹת שֶׁבֵּין אָדָם לְחֶבְרוֹ שֶׁקָּשָׁה לְשׁוּב עֲלֵיהֶם

Halacha 3 • Five Sins Between Man and His Fellow for Which Repentance is Extremely Difficult

וּמֵהֶם חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹשֶׂה אוֹתָן אֵי אִפְשָׁר לוֹ שִׁיָּשׁוּב
 that he return for him impossible them the one who does things five And from them
 בַּתְּשׁוּבָה גְּמוּרָה לְפִי שֶׁהֵם עֲוֹנוֹת שֶׁבֵּין אָדָם לְחֶבְרוֹ וְאֵינוֹ
 and he does not and his fellow man that are between sins that they are because complete in repentance
 יוֹדֵעַ חֶבְרוֹ שֶׁחָטָא לוֹ כְּדֵי שִׁיַּחְזִיר לוֹ אוֹ יִשְׁאַל מִמֶּנּוּ לְמַחֵל
 to forgive of him ask or to him that he may return in order against him whom he sinned his fellow know
 לוֹ. וְאֵלוֹ הֵן. א הַמְקַלֵּל אֶת הָרַבִּים וְלֹא קָלַל אָדָם יָדוּעַ כְּדֵי
 in order known a person curse and did not the many — the one who curses 1 they are and these him
 שִׁיִּשְׁאַל מִמֶּנּוּ כַּפָּרָה. ב וְהַחֹלֵק עִם גֵּנֵב, שֶׁלְּפִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ
 know that he does not because a thief with and the one who shares 2 forgiveness from him that he may ask
 גֵּנֵבָה זֶה שֶׁל מִי הִיא אֵלָּא הַגֵּנֵב גּוֹנֵב לְרַבִּים וּמֵבִיא לוֹ וְהוּא לּוֹקֵחַ.
 takes and he to him and brings from the many steals the thief rather it is whom of this theft
 וְעוֹד שֶׁהוּא מַחְזִיק יָד הַגֵּנֵב וּמַחְטִיאֹ. ג וְהַמוֹצֵא אֶבְדָּה
 a lost object and the one who finds 3 and causes him to sin the thief the hand of strengthens that he and furthermore

וְאִינוּ מְכַרְיָיו עָלֶיהָ עַד שְׁיִחְזִירָהּ לְבִעְלֶיהָ, לְאַחַר זְמַן כְּשִׁיעֲשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה

repentance when he makes time after to its owners he returns it until on it announce and does not

אִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ לָמִי יִחְזִיר. ד' וְהָאוֹכֵל שׁוֹר עֲנִיִּים וִיתוּמִים וְאַלְמָנוֹת.

and widows and orphans poor people an ox of and the one who eats 4 he shall return to whom know he does not

אֵלֹו בְּנֵי אָדָם אֲמָלְלִין הֵם וְאִינָן יְדוּעִים וּמְכַרְסָּמִים וְגוֹלִים מֵעִיר

from city and they wander and famous known and they are not they are unfortunate . people these

לְעִיר וְאִין לָהֶם מְכִיר כְּדִי שִׂידֵעַ שׁוֹר זֶה שֶׁל מִי הוּא

it is whom of this ox that he may know in order one who knows them to them and there is not to city

וְיִחְזִירָנוּ לוֹ. ה' וְהַמְקַבֵּל שֹׁחַד לְהַטּוֹת דִּין אִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ עַד הֵיכָן

where until know he does not judgment to pervert a bribe and the one who 5 to him and return it accepts

הַגִּיעַ הַטָּיָה זוֹ וְכַמָּה הִיא כְּחָה כְּדִי שְׁיִחְזִיר, שֶׁהַדָּבָר יֵשׁ לוֹ

to it has for the matter that he may return in order its power is and how much this perversion reached

רַגְלִים. וְעוֹד שֶׁהוּא מַחְזִיק יָד זֶה וּמַחְטִיאֹו:

and causes him to sin this one the hand of strengthens that he and furthermore legs

This halacha lists five interpersonal sins where the victim is unknown or the damage is untraceable, making restitution and complete repentance nearly impossible.

הלי"ד

חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הַמוֹנְעִים אֶת הַתְּשׁוּבָה מִפְּנֵי שְׁנֵאֵרָאִים קָלִים

Halacha 4 • Five Sins That Prevent Repentance Because People Regard Them Lightly

וּמֵהֶן חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹשֶׂה אוֹתָן אֵין חֲזָקָתוֹ לְשׁוּב מֵהֶן.

from them to repent presumption for him there is no them the one who does things are five And among them

לְפִי שֶׁהֵם דְּבָרִים קָלִים בְּעֵינֵי רַב הָאָדָם וְנִמְצָא חוֹטֵא וְהוּא יִדְמָה

imagines and he he sins and it turns out people most in the eyes of light matters they are because

שָׂאִין זֶה חֲטָא. וְאֵלֹו הֵן. א' הָאוֹכֵל מִסַּעֲדָה שְׂאִינָה מִסְפֶּקֶת לְבִעְלֶיהָ

for its owners sufficient that is not from a meal the one who eats 1 they are and these sin this that there is no

שֶׁזֶה אֲבָק גָּזַל הוּא. וְהוּא מְדַמָּה שֶׁלֹא חָטָא וַיֹּאמֶר כָּלוּם אֲכַלְתִּי אֶלָּא

except did I eat anything and says he sinned that not imagines and he it is theft is a shade of for this

בְּרִשׁוֹתָיו. ב' הַמְשַׁתְּמֵשׁ בַּעֲבוּטוֹ שֶׁל עָנִי שֶׁהַעֲבוֹט שֶׁל עָנִי אִינוּ

is not a poor person of for the pledge a poor person of the pledge the one who uses 2 with his permission

אֶלָּא כְּגוֹן קוֹרְדוֹם וּמַחְרֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלָבוֹ אִינָן חֲסָרִים וְהִרִי לֹא

not and behold losing value they are not in his heart and he says and a plow an axe such as but

גָּזַלְתִּי אוֹתוֹ. ג' הַמְּסַתְּפֵל בְּעֲרִיּוֹת מַעֲלָה עַל דַּעְתּוֹ שְׂאִין בְּכָךְ

in this that there is not his mind upon brings at forbidden the one who gazes 3 it did I steal relationships

כָּלוּם שֶׁהוּא אוֹמֵר וְכִי בַּעֲלִיתִי אוֹ קָרַבְתִּי אֶצְלָהּ. וְהוּא אִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ

know does not and he to her did I draw close or I engage in relations and did says for he anything

שְׂרָאִית הָעֵינַיִם עֹון גָּדוֹל שֶׁהִיא גּוֹרֶמֶת לְגוֹפֶן שֶׁל עֲרִיּוֹת
 forbidden relationships of the body itself causes for it great is a sin the eyes that the seeing of
 שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בַּמִּדְבָּר טו לט "וְלֹא תִתְּרוּ אַחֲרֵי לְבַבְכֶּם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם". ד
 4 your eyes and after your heart after explore and do not 39 15 Numbers as it is said
 הַמֵּתִכְבֵּד בְּקִלּוֹן חֲבֵרוֹ אֹמֵר בְּלִבּוֹ שֶׁאִינוֹ חָטָא לְפִי שְׂאִין
 there is no because a sin that it is not in his heart says his fellow with the shame of the one who honors himself
 חֲבֵרוֹ עוֹמֵד שָׁם וְלֹא הִגִּיעַ לוֹ בִּשְׁתּוּ וְלֹא בִּישּׁוֹ אֶלָּא עָרַךְ מַעֲשָׁיו
 his deeds he compared but did he shame him and not shame him reached and not there standing his fellow
 הַטּוֹבִים וְחֻכְמָתוֹ לְמוֹל מַעֲשֵׂה חֲבֵרוֹ אוֹ חֻכְמָתוֹ כְּדִי שֶׁיֵּרָאָה
 that he will appear in order his wisdom or his fellow the deeds of opposite and his wisdom the good
 מִכָּלֵל שֶׁהוּא מְכַבֵּד וְחֲבֵרוֹ בְּזוּי. ה וְהַחֹשֵׁד כְּשֶׁרִים אֹמֵר
 says worthy people and the one who 5 is disgraceful and his fellow is honorable that he from its implication suspects
 בְּלִבּוֹ שֶׁאִינוֹ חָטָא לְפִי שֶׁהוּא אֹמֵר מָה עָשִׂיתִי לוֹ וְכִי יֵשׁ שָׁם אֶלָּא
 except there there is and did to him did I do what says he because a sin that it is not in his heart
 חֹשֵׁד שֶׁמָּא עָשָׂה אוֹ לֹא עָשָׂה וְהוּא אִינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁזֶּה עֹון שְׂמֵשִׁים אָדָם
 a person for he places is a sin that this know does not and he he did not or he did perhaps suspicion
 כְּשֶׁר בְּדַעְתּוֹ כְּבַעַל עֲבֵרָה:
 transgression as a master of in his mind worthy

The Rambam lists five transgressions that people commonly rationalize as harmless, making them unlikely to repent for committing them.

ה'ה

חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הַמוֹנְעִים אֶת הַתְּשׁוּבָה וְהַנְּהִיגָה בַּעַל תְּשׁוּבָה

Halacha 5 • Five Bad Traits that Prevent Repentance and the Proper Conduct of a Penitent

וַיִּמְהֹן חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹשֶׂה אוֹתָם יִמָּשֵׁךְ אַחֲרֵיהֶם תָּמִיד וְקוֹשִׁים
 and difficult always after them will be drawn them the one who does things are five And among them
 הֵם לְפָרֵשׁ מֵהֶן. לְפִיכָךְ צָרִיךְ אָדָם לְהִזָּהֵר מֵהֶן שֶׁמָּא יִדְבֹּק בָּהֶן
 to them he will cling lest of them to be careful a person needs therefore from them to separate they are
 וְהֵן כָּלֵן יִדְעוֹת רָעוֹת עַד מָאֵד. וְאֵלּוּ הֵן. רְכִילוֹת. וְלִשׁוֹן הָרָע.
 the evil and tongue gossip they are and these very until bad are traits all of them and they
 וּבַעַל חֲמָה. וּבַעַל מַחֲשַׁבֶּה רָעָה. וְהַמֵּתִחְבֵּר לְרָשָׁע מִפְּנֵי
 because with the wicked and one who associates evil thought and a master of wrath and a master of
 שֶׁהוּא לּוֹמֵד מִמַּעֲשָׁיו וְהֵן נִרְשָׁמִים בְּלִבּוֹ. הוּא שֶׁאֵמַר שְׁלֹמֹה מִשְׁלֵי יג כ
 20 13 Mishlei Shlomo what said that is in his heart are engraved and they from his deeds learns that he
 "וְרָעָה כְּסִילִים יִרְוֶע". וְכִבֵּר בְּאֲרָנוֹ בְּהִלְכוֹת יִדְעוֹת דְּבָרִים
 the things Deos in the Laws of we explained and already will suffer harm fools and a companion of

שְׂצָרֵיךְ כָּל אָדָם לְנַהֵג בָּהֶן תָּמִיד, קֹל וְחֹמֶר לְבַעַל תְּשׁוּבָה:

repentance for a master of more so all the always with them to conduct himself person every that needs

The Rambam lists five negative character traits that are extremely difficult to abandon and explains that a penitent must be especially careful to avoid them.

ה'ל"ו

הַתְּשׁוּבָה מוֹעִילָה לְכָל הָעֲבֵרוֹת

Halacha 6 · Repentance is Effective Even for Sins that Hinder It

כָּל אֵלֹו הַדְּבָרִים וְכִיּוֹצֵא בָּהֶן אֵף עַל פִּי שְׂמַעְכֶּבֶין אֶת הַתְּשׁוּבָה אֵין

do not repentance — that they hold back though · even to them and similar things these All

מוֹנְעִין אוֹתָהּ אֶלָּא אִם עָשָׂה אָדָם תְּשׁוּבָה מִהֶן הָרִי זֶה בְּעַל תְּשׁוּבָה

repentance a master of this behold from them repentance a person made · unless it prevent

וַיֵּשׁ לוֹ חֶלֶק לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא:

to come in the world a portion to him and there is

This halacha teaches that although certain severe sins hinder the path of repentance, they never completely block a person from returning to Hashem and securing a portion in the World to Come.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Rambam details the twenty-four obstacles to Teshuvah, categorizing them into four distinct groups. First, he lists four severe sins—such as causing the masses to sin or saying "I will sin and repent"—where Hashem does not grant the sinner the opportunity to do Teshuvah. Next, he identifies five deeds that lock the paths of Teshuvah, including separating from the community, demeaning one's teachers, and hating rebuke. He then presents five sins against our fellow man where complete Teshuvah is nearly impossible because the victim cannot be identified to receive restitution, such as eating the food of the poor or taking a share of a thief's spoils. Finally, he warns against five transgressions that people mistakenly view as minor, such as looking at forbidden women or using a poor person's pledge, which prevent Teshuvah because the sinner does not even realize he has done wrong.

לְמַעֲשֶׂה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The most frightening part of this Rambam is not the list of severe sins, but the category of things we do without even realizing they are wrong. When we eat from a meal that isn't really enough for the host, use a poor person's tool thinking 'it won't hurt it,' look at things we shouldn't, or elevate ourselves by highlighting a friend's shortcomings, we tell ourselves, 'What did I do wrong? I didn't steal, I didn't hurt anyone!' This self-justification is the ultimate lock on the door of teshuvah.

To break this lock, we must cultivate a deep love for truth and a willingness to hear rebuke. The Rambam teaches that the one who hates admonishment shuts his own path to growth because he remains blind to his faults, viewing his bad deeds as good. We must become people who welcome correction, who actively seek out the guidance of Torah sages, and who are willing to look honestly at the 'small' things we do every day.

Today, pay close attention to your interactions and thoughts. If you catch yourself justifying a small slight, a questionable glance, or a minor misuse of someone else's property with the words 'it's nothing,' stop and acknowledge it honestly before Hashem without making excuses.

