

הלכות תשובה • פרק שביעי

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

CHAPTER PREVIEW

In this beautiful chapter, the Rambam teaches us the incredible power of Teshuvah and how a Yid must always strive to return to Hashem. We learn that Teshuvah is not something to put off for old age, nor is it limited to physical sins like theft or immorality; rather, a person must search his heart and do Teshuvah for bad middos like anger, hatred, and jealousy, which are even harder to break.

The Rambam warns our hearts by showing how beloved a Baal-Teshuvah is to Hashem, rising to a level so high that even the completely righteous cannot stand there. We see how Teshuvah brings us close to the Shechinah, turning a person from being far away and rejected into someone who is cherished, whose tefillos are answered immediately, and whose mitzvos are accepted with sweet favor.

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

ה"א

החוב לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה וּלְהִתְוֹדוֹת כָּל יָמָיו

Halacha 1: The Obligation to Repent and Confess to Merit the World to Come

הוֹאִיל וּרְשׁוֹת כָּל אָדָם נְתוּנָה לוֹ כְּמוֹ שֶׁפָּאֲרָנוּ יִשְׁתַּדֵּל אָדָם לַעֲשׂוֹת

to do a man should strive we explained just as to him is given man every and permission of Since

תְּשׁוּבָה וּלְהִתְוֹדוֹת בְּפִיו מִחֲטָאָיו וּלְנַעַר כְּפָיו מִחֲטָאָיו כְּדִי

in order from his sins his hands and to shake off from his sins with his mouth and to confess teshuvah

שְׂיָמוּת וְהוּא בַּעַל תְּשׁוּבָה וְיִזְכֶּה לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא:

to come the world the life of and merit teshuvah a master of and he is that he will die

Since free will is granted to every person, one must constantly strive to repent and confess his sins before death.

ה"ב

החוב לָשׁוּב בְּתְשׁוּבָה מִיָּד וּבְכָל עֵת

Halacha 2: The Obligation to Repent Immediately and at All Times

לְעוֹלָם יִרְאֶה אָדָם עֲצָמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא נוֹטֶה לְמוֹת וְשָׂמָּה יָמוּת בְּשַׁעֲתוֹ

in his moment he will die and perhaps to die is leaning he as if himself a person should view Always

וְנִמְצָא עוֹמֵד בְּחַטָּאוֹ. לְפִיכָךְ יָשׁוּב מִחֲטָאָיו מִיָּד וְלֹא יֵאמָר

should say and not immediately from his sins he should repent therefore in his sin standing and he will be found

כְּשֶׁאֶזְקִין אָשׁוּב שָׂמָּה יָמוּת טָרָם שְׂיִזְקִין. הוּא שֶׁשְׁלֹמֹה אָמַר בְּחֻכְמָתוֹ

in his wisdom said what Shlomo this is that he grows old before he will die perhaps I will repent when I grow old

קָהַל ט ח "בְּכָל עֵת יִהְיוּ בְּגָדָיָה לְבָנִים":

white your garments should be times at all eight nine Koheles

The Rambam explains that because a person's death is unpredictable, one must repent immediately and keep his spiritual garments constantly clean.

אל תאמר שאין תשובה אלא מעברות שיש בהן מעשה פגון
 such as an action in them that have from transgressions except repentance that there is no say Do not
 זנות וגזל וגנבה. אלא כשם שצריך אדם לשוב מאלו כה הוא צריך
 needs he so from these to repent a person is required just as rather and theft and robbery promiscuity
 לחפש בדעות רעות שיש לו ולשוב מן הפעס ומן האיבה ומן
 and from hatred and from anger from and to repent to him that are evil among character traits to search
 הקנאה ומן ההתול ומרדיפת הממון והכבוד ומרדיפת המאכלות
 foods and from pursuit of and honor money and from pursuit of frivolity and from envy
 וכיוצא בהן מן הכל צריך לחזור בתשובה. ואלו העונות קשים מאותן
 than those are harder sins and these in repentance to return he needs everything from of them and the like
 שיש בהן מעשה שבזמן שאדם נשקע באלו קשה הוא לפרש מהם.
 from them to separate it is hard in these is sunken a person because when an action in them that have
 וכן הוא אומר ישעיה נה ז "יעזב רשע" וגו':
 etc. the wicked" "Let abandon 7 55 Yeshayahu says it and so

The Rambam explains that repentance is not only required for physical sins of action, but is even more critically needed for correcting bad character traits like anger, envy, and greed.

ואל ידמה אדם בעל תשובה שהוא מרחק ממעלת הצדיקים
 the righteous from the level of is distant that he repentance who is a master of a person imagine And let not
 מפני העונות והחטאות שעשה. אין הדבר כן אלא אהוב ונחמד הוא
 he is and desirable beloved rather matter so is the not that he did and the sins the iniquities because of
 לפני הבורא כאלו לא חטא מעולם. ולא עוד אלא ששכרו הרבה
 much that his reward is rather only and not ever he sinned not as if the Creator before
 שהרי טעם טעם החטא ופרש ממנו וכבש יצרו. אמרו חכמים
 the Sages said his inclination and conquered from it and separated the sin the taste of he tasted for behold
 מקום שבעלי תשובה עומדין אין צדיקים גמורין יכולין לעמד בו.
 in it to stand are able complete righteous not even stand repentance where masters of the place
 כלומר מעלתו גדולה ממעלת אלו שלא חטאו מעולם מפני שהן
 that they because ever sin who did not these than the level of greater their level is meaning to say
 כובשים יצורם יותר מהם:
 than them more their inclination conquer

This halacha teaches that a penitent should not feel inferior to the righteous, as his reward is immense for overcoming temptation.

כָּל הַנְּבִיאִים כָּלָן צִוּוּ עַל הַתְּשׁוּבָה וְאִין יִשְׂרָאֵל נִגְאָלִין אֲלָא
 except are redeemed Israel and not repentance concerning commanded all of them the prophets All
 בַּתְּשׁוּבָה. וּכְבָר הַבְּטִיחָה תּוֹרָה שְׁסוּף יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה
 repentance will do Israel that ultimately the Torah promised and already through repentance
 בְּסוּף גְּלוּתָן וּמִיד הֵן נִגְאָלִין שְׁנֵאמַר דְּבָרִים לֹא "וְהָיָה כִּי
 when and it shall be 1 30 Devarim as it is said are redeemed they and immediately their exile at the end of
 יָבֹאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים" וְגו' דְּבָרִים לֹא ב "וְשָׁבְתָּ עַד ה'"
 Hashem unto and you shall return 2 30 Devarim etc. the things all upon you there shall come
 אֲלֶהֱיָהּ דְּבָרִים לֹא ג "וְשָׁב ה'" אֲלֶהֱיָהּ וְגו':
 etc. your God Hashem and will return 3 30 Devarim your God

The Rambam explains that all prophets commanded repentance, and that Israel's ultimate redemption is guaranteed to occur through their repentance at the end of exile.

גְּדוּלָה תְּשׁוּבָה שְׁמִקְרָבֶת אֶת הָאָדָם לְשִׁכְנָה שְׁנֵאמַר הוֹשַׁע יָד ב "שׁוּבָה
 Return 2 14 Hoshea as it is said to the Shechinah the person — for it draws close is repentance Great
 יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֲלֶהֱיָהּ. וְנֵאמַר עֲמוֹס דָּו "וְלֹא שָׁבְתָם עָדִי נָא
 says unto Me have you returned and not 6 4 Amos and it is said your God Hashem unto O Israel
 ה'". וְנֵאמַר יִרְמְיָה דָּא "אִם תָּשׁוּב יִשְׂרָאֵל נָא ה' אֵלַי תָּשׁוּב."
 you shall return to Me Hashem says O Israel you will return If 1 4 Jeremiah and it is said Hashem
 כְּלוּמַר אִם תִּחְזֹר בַּתְּשׁוּבָה בִּי תִדְבַּק. הַתְּשׁוּבָה מְקַרְבֶּת אֶת הַרְחוּקִים.
 those who are far — draws close Repentance you will cling to Me in repentance you return if meaning
 אָמַשׁ הָיָה זֶה שְׁנֵאנִי לִפְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם מְשֻׁקָּץ וּמְרָחָק וְתוֹעֵבָה. וְהַיּוֹם
 and today and an abomination and distanced disgusting the Omnipresent before hated this one was Yesterday
 הוּא אָהוּב וְנִחְמָד קְרוֹב וְיָדִיד. וְכֵן אַתָּה מוֹצֵא שְׁבִלְשׁוֹן שֶׁהַקְדוּשׁ
 that the Holy One that with the language find you And so and a friend close and desirable is beloved he
 בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְרַחֵק הַחוּטָאִים בָּהּ מְקַרֵּב אֶת הַשָּׂבִים בֵּין יָחִיד
 an individual whether those who return — He draws close with it the sinners distances is He Blessed
 בֵּין רַבִּים. שְׁנֵאמַר הוֹשַׁע בֹּא "וְהָיָה בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר לָהֶם לֹא
 Not to them it was said where in the place And it shall be 1 2 Hoshea as it is said many whether
 עֲמִי אַתֶּם יֹאמַר לָהֶם בְּנֵי אֵל חַי". וְנֵאמַר בִּיכְנִיָּהוּ
 concerning Yecheiah And it is said the Living God Children of to them it shall be said are you My people
 בְּרִשְׁעָתוֹ כָּתַב כְּתָבוֹ יִרְמְיָה כֹּב ל "אֶת הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה עֲרִירִי גִבּוֹר לֹא
 not a man childless this the man — 30 22 Jeremiah write down Write in his wickedness

יִצְלַח בְּיָמָיו", יִרְמִיָּה כֵּב כַּד "אִם יִהְיֶה כְּנִיָּהוּ בֶן יְהוֹיָקִים מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה
 Yehudah king of Yehoyakim son of Chonyahu there will be If 24 22 Jeremiah in his days shall prosper
 חוֹתֶם עַל יַד יְמִינִי" וְגו'. וְכִיּוֹן שָׁשָׁב בְּגָלוֹתוֹ נֹאמַר בְּזֶרְבָבֶל
 concerning Zerubavel it was said in his exile that he repented And once etc. My right hand of upon a signet ring
 בְּנוֹ חַגִּי ב כֹּג "כִּיּוֹם הַהוּא נֹאם ה' צָבָאוֹת אֶקְחָה זֶרְבָבֶל בֶּן
 son of Zerubavel I will take you of Hosts Hashem says that On the day 23 2 Chaggai his son
 שְׂאֵלְתִיאל עַבְדִּי נֹאם ה' וְשִׁמְתִּיהָ כַּחוֹתֶם":
 as a signet ring and I will place you Hashem says My servant Shaltiel

This halacha illustrates how repentance completely transforms a person's spiritual status from being distanced and detested to being beloved and intimately close to Hashem.

ה'ל' ז

מַעֲלַת הַתְּשׁוּבָה וְהַתְּקַרְבוֹת לְשִׁכְנָה

Halacha 7 · The Exalted Level of Teshuvah and Clinging to the Shechinah

כַּמָּה מַעֲלָה מַעֲלַת הַתְּשׁוּבָה. אָמַש הָיָה זֶה מְבָדֵל מֵה' אֱלֹהֵי
 the God of from Hashem separated this one was Yesterday Teshuvah is the level of exalted How
 יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר יִשְׁעִיה נֹט ב "עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם הָיוּ מְבָדֵלִים בֵּינָכֶם לְבֵין
 and between between you separating were your sins 2 59 Yeshayahu as it is said Yisrael
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם". צוֹעֵק וְאִינוֹ נִעָנָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר יִשְׁעִיה א טו "כִּי תִרְבוּ תַפִּלָּה"
 prayer you multiply when 15 1 Yeshayahu as it is said answered and is not He cries out your God
 וְגו'. וְעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוֹת וְטוֹרְפִין אוֹתָן בְּפָנָיו שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר יִשְׁעִיה א יב "מִי בִקֵּשׁ
 requested Who 12 1 Yeshayahu as it is said before him them and they tear mitzvot And he performs etc.
 זֹאת מִיָּדְכֶם רִמַּס חֲצָרֵי", מֵלֹאכִי א י "מִי גַם בְּכֶם וְיִסְגֹּר דְלָתֵים"
 doors would shut among you also Who 10 1 Malachi My courts to trample from your hand this
 וְגו'. וְהַיּוֹם הוּא מְדַבֵּק בְּשִׁכְנָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר דְּבָרִים ד ד "וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבָקִים
 who cling And you 4 4 Devarim as it is said to the Shechinah is clinging he And today etc.
 בַּה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם". צוֹעֵק וְנִעָנָה מִיָּד שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר יִשְׁעִיה סה כד
 24 65 Yeshayahu as it is said immediately and is answered He cries out your God to Hashem
 "וְהָיָה טָרֵם יִקְרְאוּ וְאֲנִי אֶעֱנֶה". וְעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוֹת וּמְקַבְּלִין אוֹתָן בְּנִחָה
 with pleasure them and they accept mitzvot And he performs will answer and I they call before And it shall be
 וְשִׁמְחָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר קֹהֶלֶת ט ז "כִּי כָבֹד רָצָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת מַעֲשָׂיָה". וְלֹא
 And not your deeds — God has favored already for 7 9 Koheles as it is said and joy
 עוֹד אֵלָּא שְׂמֵתָאוּיִם לָהֶם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר מֵלֹאכִי ג ד "וְעֹרְבָה לָה'
 to Hashem And it shall be pleasing 4 3 Malachi as it is said them that they desire but only
 מִנְחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנִים קְדָמָנִיּוֹת":
 ancient and as in years old as in the days of and Yerushalayim Yehudah the offering of

This halacha contrasts the spiritual distance of a sinner before teshuvah with their closeness and acceptance by Hashem after teshuvah.

ה'ל' ח

הנהגת בעלי תשובה ואסור הונאת דברים להם

Halacha 8 · The Conduct of Penitents and the Prohibition of Verbally Oppressing Them

בעלי תשובה דרכן להיות שפלים וענוים ביותר. אם חרפו אותם
them shamed If exceedingly and humble lowly to be their way is repentance Masters of
הכסילים במעשיהם הראשונים ואמרו להן אמש היית עושה כך וכך
and so so doing you were Yesterday to them and said the first for their deeds the fools
ואמש היית אומר כך וכך. אל ירגישו להן אלא שומעין ושמחים
and rejoice they hear rather to them they feel do not and so so saying you were and yesterday
ויודעין שזו זכות להם. שכל זמן שהם בושים ממעשיהם שעברו
that passed of their deeds are ashamed that they time for all for them a merit that this is and know
ונכלמים מהן זכותם מרבה ומעלתם מתגדלת. וחטא גמור הוא לומר
is to say it complete And a sin is raised and their level abundant their merit is by them and humiliated
לבעל תשובה זכר מעשיה הראשונים או להזכירן לפניו כדי
in order before him to mention them or the first your deeds Remember repentance to a master of
לבישו. או להזכיר דברים וענינים הדומין להם כדי להזכירו מה
what to remind him in order to them that are similar and subjects matters to mention or to embarrass him
עשה. הכל אסור ומזהר עליו בכלל הונאת דברים שהזהירה
that warned words wronging of in the category of against it and warned is forbidden Everything he did
תורה עליה שנאמר ויקרא כה יז "ולא תונו איש את עמיתו":
his colleague — a man you shall wrong And not 17 25 Vayikra as it is said against it the Torah

This halacha teaches that penitents must remain humble when reminded of their past, while strictly forbidding others from bringing up their previous sins.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter outlines the practical and spiritual path of the Baal-Teshuvah, beginning with the urgency of immediate repentance and the need to purify one's inner character traits. The Rambam emphasizes that Israel's ultimate redemption depends entirely on Teshuvah, which has the power to completely transform a person's relationship with Hashem from separation to total closeness and clinging to the Shechinah. Finally, the halachos teach us the proper conduct for a Baal-Teshuvah, who should embrace humility, and the strict Torah prohibition against reminding a Baal-Teshuvah of his past sins, which falls under the severe sin of verbal abuse.

My dear talmid, look at the incredible chiddush the Rambam is teaching us here. We often think of teshuvah as a heavy, bitter court case meant only for the 'big' sins of action, like stealing or breaking Shabbos. But the Rambam opens our eyes to a much deeper avodah: the real battlefield of teshuvah is inside our own hearts, in our middos. It is about turning back to Hashem from anger, jealousy, the constant chase after honor, and the hunger for physical desires. These quiet, internal struggles are actually harder to fix because they get woven into who we are.

But look at the sweetness the Rambam reveals to us! The moment you make the decision to turn back, you are not just 'forgiven' like a pardoned criminal who is tolerated from a distance. No, the Rambam says you become 'beloved, desirable, close, and a dear friend' to Hashem. Yesterday, a person's bad middos created a wall, making his tefillos feel blocked. Today, after teshuvah, he is clinging to the Shechinah, and Hashem promises, 'Before you even call out, I will answer.' Your mitzvos are not just accepted; Hashem literally desires them.

Do not let the yetzer hara tell you that you are too far gone or that your struggles with anger or jealousy make you unworthy. The Sages tell us that in the place where a baal teshuvah stands, even the completely righteous cannot stand. Every single time you conquer your nature, even in a small way, you create an closeness with Hashem that is unimaginably precious.

Today, choose one internal middah, like holding back from a sharp word of anger, or stopping yourself from chasing a bit of honor, and make a quiet, immediate teshuvah in your heart, knowing that this very moment makes you deeply beloved and close to Hashem.