

We learn in the very first chapter the very first paragraph of the Rambam's Chilkas Teshuva that we must do Teshuva. We must repent from our sins if we are to be forgiven for them. The Rambam details whether it is a positive commandment or any other commandment, etc. Even if we had brought a sacrifice it was not enough unless we had done Teshuva, that unless we do Teshuva then we cannot be forgiven for our sins. But then immediately in the second paragraph of the same first chapter the Rambam says something very strange. He says that the scapegoat, after it was sent out, that it affected atonement for Israel and it affected atonement on all the sins of the Torah, whether they are easy or hard ones. In other words, whether a person violated a minor sin or a major sin, whether he did it on purpose or he did it by accident, whether he knew about it or did not know about it, everything is forgiven. If he does Teshuva, if he repents, then all sins are forgiven, but if he does not do Teshuva then this scapegoat only forgives easy sins but not on the hard sins. What are the hard sins? These are the hard sins in which there is a death penalty or excision from the hands of heaven, which means that you were found guilty by the court of heaven and that you are cut off from the Jewish people. There is argument among the rabbis about exactly what it means to be cut off from the Jewish people. Some say you die before you are 50, some say that your children do not live, other people say that your children and progeny no longer remain Jews, etc. Here we see there is a clear contradiction. In the first paragraph the Rambam says that everybody has to do Teshuva before he is forgiven, and in the second one he says that the scapegoat that used to be part of the Temple ritual forgives even if you do not do Teshuva. It is only the difficult sins that bring with them the death penalty or excision in which you are not forgiven.

Also later on in the Rambam we learn how he says that even though Teshuva atones for our sins, yet there are certain sins that Teshuva, itself, does not forgive immediately. For example, if a person violates a positive commandment, then his sins are forgiven immediately, but if he violates a negative commandment and he

does Teshuva then he is forgiven but not until Yom Kippur. When Yom Kippur comes then he is forgiven. Then there are other sins, for example, that if he violates a law which has the potential death penalty or excision and he does Teshuva, then Yom Kippur together with his repentance and different troubles that will come upon him, they will cause his atonement. We see that according to here in the fourth paragraph of the first chapter that Teshuva does not seem to bring complete forgiveness as it seemed to imply that it does in the first paragraph of the first chapter. What is happening here? And what actually is this whole concept of the scapegoat? What does a scapegoat mean anyway?

We can understand the concept of the scapegoat if we understand that according to Jewish thinking G-d is very merciful, and that even when G-d accepts our repentance and still says that even though we have done wrong and still must be punished, that He minimizes the punishment as much as possible. For example in the civil courts and even in the criminal courts if a person admits to wrongdoing then, of course, that is taken into consideration in sentencing him, but he is still punished. He is still punished somewhat. Maybe he will get parole or a lighter prison sentence. Maybe the death penalty will be softened to life imprisonment, etc. The same is true with G-d, too, that when G-d accepts our repentance and in certain instances, as we say when a person does a hard sin which has excision or the death penalty connected with it, that He still exacts some sort of punishment also. What type of punishment does He exact? The rabbis say because G-d is merciful that He many times exacts a punishment which is itself not very difficult, not very hard. For example, they say that to G-d Amashehu. Amashehu means a little bit of amount is equivalent to the whole deed. For example, when I buy a house and I put down earnest money people do not realize that if you walk away from the house you just do not lose your earnest money; you have to pay for that house. If the contract is drawn up correctly by a lawyer that earnest money binds you to buy the house.

In Jewish law if a person wanted to buy a house and he only gave a penny down as earnest money but that penny was exchanged, that person then is liable to buy that house. So the person who is buying the house, if he receives that penny, if that person gives a penny for that house then he has to buy that house. Many times in other Jewish law, too, a very minimum amount can make a very big difference. A very minute amount of chometz, even a Mashu, will make a whole house full of normally Pesachdik things treif and you cannot use them for Pesach. The rabbis say that many times G-d just takes a very little punishment. To Him that is enough. In fact, the rabbis even go so far as to say that many times G-d just takes a symbolic punishment because there is another concept in Jewish law called Chalepeek where I can even buy that house by not even giving a penny. All I do is lift up a handkerchief, that a person gives me his handkerchief and I lift it up. By my act of lifting it up I acquire that house. So G-d, many times, too, instead of physically punishing us punishes us symbolically by causing us aggravation and pains of conscience, etc., unease, things of that nature.

There is also a third concept in Jewish law and that is where we are talking here about Yom Kippur where you have the two goats. One is put on the altar and sacrificed and the other is set out to roam and eventually meets his death in the wilderness. It is run over a cliff. People who run free do not end up with good lives. It is only people who are dedicated, who are willing to sacrifice for ideals and fore others who live actually a good life. What is that concept? The rabbis say well that goat that was sent out into the desert was, in a certain sense, a sacrifice to evil beings. What do we mean by that because we do not believe in sacrificing to evil beings? It is against Jewish law. What we mean by that is that all those punishments, all that pain and suffering that came upon us because we followed evil ways, G-d should take and use that as a punishment. For example, if a person was a dope addict and suffered the pains of withdrawal and that because he was a dope addict he was beaten up and mugged and because he was a dope addict he did

not have any money to buy food and he suffered by having to sleep out in the street in the cold and so forth, G-d should accept all these things as our punishment, even though they were a direct result of our serving evil. If we were a member of a gang and got beaten up by other members as an initiation rite, G-d should accept that these pains that we suffered, even though we did it in order to further evil purposes, that He should accept it now as our punishment and, therefore, there should be no further punishment.

As also see something else. This may answer, too, what is the concept between sending the goat out, but how can we say that sending this scapegoat will forgive people for sins even if they did not do Teshuva, even if they are not worry, even if they do not say they did the sin and they are sorry for it and they will never do it again? How can it be? That is exactly against Jewish law and the Jewish way of thinking. We see, though, that on Yom Kippur there are really two types of forgiveness that we are being asked. We see that in the prayer that we say for the Kedushas Hayom. We know that there are 3 blessings that we say in the beginning of every Amidah and 3 at the end, and at the holiday we add a seventh one which talks about the essence of the holiday, which is in the middle. Here, too, we say, "Blessed are You, O G-d, King Mohel, Who foregoes punishment of our sins and the sins of the people of the House of Israel." This means that we sin as individuals and we sin as members of the Jewish people. We sin as members of the Jewish people when we do not hold up our obligations as members of the Jewish people. For example, we can be great human beings but we can still sin against the Jewish people. How is that possible? For example, I could give charity but I give only to the symphony and the homeless and the United Way, but I do not give a penny to the shul or UJA. I do not assume my responsibilities as a Jew, or I could fight for social justice for everybody except for the Jewish people. Therefore, I have sinned against the Jewish people. When he is talking here in the second paragraph, we are talking about those sins that you do as a member of the Jewish

people. For example, a person who turns his back on the Jewish people and on his religion. He is sinning against the Jewish people. Now there are two different types of Teshuva, so to speak. One type of Teshuva is when you are talking about individual sins, that I, myself, am never going to do these bad things that I did before as an individual. There is another way of doing Teshuva when it comes to the Jewish people. How do you do Teshuva when you are a member of the Jewish people? We do it by clinging to the Jewish people, by coming to shul on Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur, by making a pledge to the shul, by making a pledge to the UJA, by being involved in Jewish causes, by writing letters to your congressmen, by attending rallies, by attaching yourself to the Jewish people. You can observe all sorts of mitzvahs, as there are certain people who even wear black hats and black coats, but they hate the Jewish people. They talk much against Israel. They write letters against it. These people are sinning against the Jewish people, even though they have other mitzvahs that they are doing. Therefore, there are two things that are involved here. There is being a part of the Jewish people by the very fact that you cling to it and you assert your identity and you are proud of your Jewish people and you want to help the Jewish people. That is the type of Teshuva that we are talking about here when we are talking about that scapegoat. That scapegoat is a symbol of the Jewish people, that all those problems and troubles that have come upon us, G-d, as Jews, all the persecution and the hounding, please, accept them as our punishment for not doing enough to help the Jewish people. Therefore, the only sins that would not be forgiven for a person who did not do Teshuva in the sense that he really did not think about those things that he did or did not do, are those hard sins which already take you out from the Jewish people. Korais is being cut off from the Jewish people. Therefore, there you would have to do actual Teshuva as an individual. You just could not cling to the Jewish people. Therefore, the second paragraph then is in harmony with the first paragraph, but, yet, we still have another problem, and the problem is the problem that we find

in the seventh chapter of the Rambam when he is talking here about Teshuva. He says how Teshuva causes a person to be completely different. He says, "Last night you were hated before G-d. You were far and feeling disgusted, but after doing Teshuva today you are loved and you are a friend and you are close." So we see here that Teshuva brings close those who return, whether as individuals or as members of the Jewish people. We see here, too, that Teshuva immediately brings you into G-d's presence and G-d is not like a civil court, where if a person repents it just mitigates his punishment. G-d forgives all punishment. How can we learn over here where it says here that certain sins, if you do a negative commandment, that Teshuva does not immediately free you from all punishment, but, instead, you have to wait until Yom Kippur and if it is something with Korais, a potential death penalty, then you even have to have Yom Kippur and Teshuva and different punishments have to come upon you, different pains have to come upon you. So what are we talking about? There seems to be a contradiction again, but here again there is no contradiction because we see, too, that there are two different types of Teshuva. There is a Teshuva from fear, from Meera, and there is a Teshuva from love. That is why we use the two expressions, too, Mochail Visaleach. In fact, what we are talking about here is that we not only want G-d to forego punishment from us but we also want us to be made pure, to feel clean. Sin has two bad effects on human beings. It makes us liable for punishment and it also makes us feel unclean. We all know that when we hurt another person, that that person is only going to wait for an opportunity to get back at us. Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. We also feel disgusted with ourselves. Therefore, there are two concepts here. There is the concept of Mochail and the concept of Soleach. In fact, when we pray on the Al Chait, what do we say? We ask for three things. We ask, "On all these things, G-d, forgive us, make us feel pure, forego all punishment, G-d, and if You cannot forego all punishment, at least mitigate it. Do not make it too hard or strong." In fact, too, one of the reasons we say these Al Chait in the plural

is because we are also talking about sins against the Jewish people and also sins as individuals. We can see that very clearly from the davening, because when we pray the Amidah as individuals we go right into the recitation of sins. There is no prologue. All we say is, "Our G-d, G-d of our fathers, make our prayer reach Thee to not ignore our plea," and then we say we have acted treasonously, aggressively, slanderously, etc. When the hazzan repeats it he does not go right into it. There is a very big prologue in which he talks how G-d has promised to redeem the Jewish people. It talks a lot about the promises to the Jewish people, and then we sing very happy songs. We sing, "We are Your children and You are our father," because we know that G-d will forgive us as the Jewish people because as the Jewish people we are eternal, and as long as there are any Jews who want to keep the name Jew and who want to congregate together as Jews G-d will forgive us as Jews, that even without complete Teshuva He will forgive us except that we violate those things which will cause us to be cut off from the Jewish people. So there is a whole different concept here about the individual and about being a member of the people. We can be pure as individuals but not be pure as members of the Jewish people, etc., and we can also have punishment foregone as members as individuals but not as members of the Jewish people. We know that we need to have both things if we are to function correctly as a human being. In fact, the question is often asked, what happens if a person on Rosh Hashonna cannot go to shul and he has to hear the blowing of the shofar? We know during the blowing of the shofar we blow the shofar 30 times before we start the Mussaf Amidah and then we blow it another 30 times during the Mussaf and in some shul they do it 30 times during the silent Amidah and 30 times when the Mussaf is being repeated. Do we have to do all these notes for the person at home? The answer is no, because for an individual you only have to blow the 30 that are done before the Mussaf Amidah because that is for the individual. When we do in the Mussaf we are talking about the Jewish people and you have to be with the Jewish people to hear it as a people. So we see from

this that there are two concepts. One concept is for G-d to forego punishment, and the other concept is that G-d should completely wipe us clean and make us feel pure. So that depends upon the individual. Is the individual going to do a type of Teshuva which is out of love and in which his whole character is changed? That is why in the seventh chapter we are talking about a person examining his character. What does character have to do with his sins? I am sorry for my sin, but unless a person is willing to go deeper and look at his character and change his character and use those traits that G-d has given him that can be used either for good or bad only for good, then that person is not going to be able to do Teshuva from love, but if you change and do Teshuva only because you are afraid. You are afraid because maybe the husband will come home now. You are afraid that they are going to put in a new computer system and, therefore, they are going to catch you when you embezzle; it is still a form of Teshuva when you decide not to do these things again. Then G-d just mitigates the punishment. Then you are not forgiven completely for many sins because the Teshuva really does not deal with your character, but if you do it out of love so that you can take all that energy that you used to do in bad things and now do it in good things, then G-d will forgive you completely. We all know as human beings, unfortunately, that when we hate someone we hate him much more than when we say we love someone. When we hate someone we try to hurt them, we think about them, and so forth, and if you love someone maybe occasionally you will do them a favor, especially if they ask. When a person does Teshuva from love then a person wants to use all that he used to devote to bad things now to use them for good things. That is why the rabbis say and the Rambam says it explicitly here that when a person does Teshuva from love he stands in a higher place than does a person who never sinned at all. That is why it says here, too, that the Rambam says that the place that the Baal Teshuva, a complete Tzadik who never sins is not able to stand there, which means to say that the level of a person who sinned and came back is greater than the level of the person who never sinned at all because

that person understands the power of the sin and understands the force that pushes him there and he is able to take that same force and use it for good.

We should always remember that G-d is there to help us and G-d wants to forgive our sins and G-d wants to make us pure. It is all up to us, and that we have to remember that we have two statuses. We have status as a human being and status as a Jew, and that we should always try to live up to being the best possible person we are and the best possible Jew that we can be, which means that we have to do things that also take into account the Jewish people. In America we do not. People do not take into account the Jewish people when they intermarry. People do not take into account the Jewish people when they do not want to spend the money to give their children a Jewish education. People do not take into account the Jewish people when they will not contribute to Jewish causes which further the continuance of the Jewish people. We live as not only a human being but also as a member of the Jewish people. We all know that in many respects Teshuva is compared in Jewish law to redemption, that a person's personality is scattered in many different directions and he feels alienated, as Kafka said, when a person does not have any focus to his life, but when a person finds that G-d needs him and cares for him then in a certain sense his own personality is gathered in together, just as the Jewish people are being gathered today from all corners of the world to Israel. The redemption is taking place and we should further that redemption. We should redeem ourselves by putting G-d back in our lives and Torah back into our lives, and we should help in the redemption of the Jewish people by making sure that we help those causes which bring the Jewish people together and bring them back to Israel. We should do both these things because if we do both these things we will not only redeem ourselves and our people, but we will surely bring the Mashiach. May this happen soon so that next year will be truly a year of peace and harmony and complete redemption for ourselves as individuals and for ourselves as Jews.