

The Rambam in the first chapter and in the first section of his laws of teshuva tells us that we are obligated to do teshuva and that when we do teshuva we are obligated to confess before G-d and that this confession has to take the form of words. We know that if we do not really crystallize our thoughts into words they really do not have any effect upon us, so it is important that we crystallize our thoughts into words. There is an argument among the rabbis whether or not teshuva is a mitzvah. After all, the Rambam, himself, does not list teshuva as one of the 613 commandments. He does, of course, mention confession, but a confession without true teshuva is not really anything. Many rabbis have explained that ~~there is a difference when you perform a mitzvah~~, that there are actually two parts to the mitzvah, and many times these two parts are simultaneous but sometimes they are not simultaneous. For example, when you pick up the lulav and shake the lulav the act of shaking and the fulfillment of the mitzvah, the Peula and the Kiumah are exactly the same thing, but there are many mitzvahs in which the act and the fulfillment of the mitzvah are actually two separate things. This is especially true in mitzvahs between man and G-d. In mitzvahs between man and man it is really not very important what your intention is. In fact, there is an argument ^{among} ~~with~~ the rabbis whether mitzvahs need Kavonah, intention, or not. If you are helping a poor man the poor man does not really care whether or not you are giving him the \$500 because you want your name in the paper or because you want to do a pure mitzvah, ^{most of the} ~~so many times~~ when we do mitzvahs between man and man there really is no difference whether we have pure motivation or not. The important thing is that we have decided to help a poor man, ^(mitzvah) but when it comes to between man and G-d, though, especially when it comes to prayer, ~~when it comes to teshuva~~ then the act and the fulfillment are many times two different things. You can say all the prayers you want but if you do not really intend to pray to G-d and it is just a show to impress other people, then you have not really fulfilled the mitzvah. You may have done the Peula, the act of the mitzvah, but you have not done the Kiumah of the mitzvah because the fulfillment of the mitzvah is actually in your heart.

It is similar to when you mourn for somebody. When you are mourning for somebody you may actually go through the act of mourning, take off your shoes, don't sit on the floor, but if you do not really feel in your heart bad about the death of an individual you have not really fulfilled the mitzvah. So there are certain mitzvahs, especially between man and G-d, which require us to have a certain frame of mind. The same thing is true if we would just have a confession without really in our heart of hearts being sorry for what we have done, then, of course, this is really not much of a mitzvah. We have not fulfilled the mitzvah. It is important, the Rambam says, that we bring to crystallization our thoughts and we do that by honoring words. Therefore, he says that when you do teshuva you have to make the following confession. He says it is even a positive commandment. He says, what do you say? You say, "Please, G-d, I have sinned. I have acted crookedly. I have rebelled before You, and I done so and so, and here I am sorry and I am ashamed for my actions and forever I will never return to do this thing." This is what the Rambam says in the very first section of the chapter of the laws of teshuva what a person has to say and how he has to act.

But you will notice in the second section in the second chapter when again he is talking about teshuva he uses a different type of terminology. In this case he says, what is teshuva? That a person should leave his sin and he should decide in his heart not to do it anymore because it says the Rosh should leave his path, and so he should be sorry upon what he did in the past because it says, "After I have returned I am sorry," and he should testify about this to the Knower of all Secrets so that he should not return to this sin forever. In other words, in the second section of the second chapter of the laws of teshuva the Rambam emphasizes the fact that the person in the future should stop doing the deed that he going to do, that the essence of teshuva is actually your thoughts about the future, while in the first case the Rambam seems to be stressing the past where it says here that I have sinned before You and I did so and so and from now on I am not going to do

it anymore, while in the second chapter of the second section he says that a person should say that in the future he is not going to do this anymore and has determined in his heart that he will not do it anymore. It says an evil person should leave his path and then he is sorry on the past, so we see that in the first instance we are talking about the past and in the second instance we are talking about the future. What could this possibly mean?

Perhaps if we understand something about vows that a person takes we can understand about what the Rambam is talking about. We know that there are two different types of ways of getting out of a vow. For example, if a person made a vow and we know that we are supposed to keep our word but circumstances have changed, things are different, and so, therefore, you know you cannot keep your vow so you have to go before a Beis Din to ask that your vow be annulled. The rabbis can annul your vow based upon two differing principles. The first time they can do it is through a way called the Petach. What does this mean? This means that you say that if you would have realized the consequences of your vow you would never have made it in the first place. For example, let's say a person made a vow saying that for 60 days he would not eat meat. You forgot all about Shabbos and Yontif and on Shabbos and Yontif you have to eat meat and so, therefore, you go before a Beis Din, a group of three rabbis, and you say, "I did not realize when I said that I did not have in mind Shabbos and Yontif. I was only talking about the weekdays." Therefore, since you have made this error the rabbis say there is an opening, a Petach, in order to nullify your vow. Another illustration of this is, let's say you got mad at a certain individual and you took a vow you would never have any benefit from him. Then it turns out that he holds a very important government position and in order for you to register property, in order for you to register your sales you have to go through him, so you then go to the rabbis, the Beis Din, and you say, "Listen, if I would have known that this person was going to get such an important position as the tax assessor and I need his help and his signature on all these

documents, I would never have made such a vow." Again the rabbis will consider this a Petach and will nullify your vow. And, of course, if a person made a mistake and says, "Those people sitting in the corner I will not have anything to do with," and you thought that they were strangers when really they were your brothers, but that is a different story, then the vow was never in effect in the first place because it was made under false conditions. You did not realize that these were your brothers instead of somebody else. That is an altogether different case.

The second way that you get out of a vow is you go before a Beis Din and you tell them you are sorry and you do not know what came over you to do such a thing and you really are ashamed that you made such a vow and you want to get out of it.

The rabbis will let you out of it, too. What's the difference between the two ways?

If it is a Petach then the whole vow is nullified, but if it is just a Charota, or shame, then it only applies to that part of the vow in which the shame occurs and the rest of the vow you have to keep.

We see here, too, that when we look at the cases that the Rambam is talking about that he is really talking about two different types of cases. In one case we are talking about an intellectual vow, an intellectual teshuva. There are two ways that you can make teshuva. You can make teshuva from your intellect and you can make teshuva from your emotions. What do I mean by making teshuva from your emotions?

Well, you did an act that so reviled and disgusted you that you will never go back to it again. You do not even know how you were able to do such a thing but it gave you such pain, such anguish, your conscience bothered you so much that you just never were going to go back and do it again. This is similar to the story which we learn about in the Book of Malachi where David's son, Amnon, fell in love with his half-sister, Tamar. You know that David was not the best father in the world. David had a lot of tzores all his life, and the rabbis say he was not the best father in the world because he never bothered with his children. He never inquired what

they were doing. He never disciplined them. His son, Amnon, fell in love with his half-sister, Tamar. Of course, she would not have anything to do with him since they were brother and sister, but one day he decided he had to have Tamar, so he pretended he was sick and he requested Tamar to come and nurse him. When she came to nurse him he grabbed ahold of her and he had his way with her, but then afterwards he told the servants, "Take this one away." He did not even mention her name, and he hated her worse than he had loved her before. This, of course, is common in many types of crimes. People hate the victim, that the victim is victimized twice, that all of a sudden the rapist says, "Oh, it was the girl's fault. She was too beautiful. She was the one who caused it." Or people will say, "It was that store owner's fault. They did not have enough security. That's why I shoplifted." They transfer their own guilt to the victim. In this case he said that she was disgusting to him and she was hurt twice. She was not only hurt once because she was raped but twice because she was treated to this ghastly display of venom after she was the one who had been raped, not Amnon. Of course, I guess this explains why so many rapists kill their victims because they feel that they are disgusted with them. That, of course, is a terrible, terrible thing. So we see that there are certain types of sins that the emotional response to the sin is so great that you really do not have any fear that the person will return to that particular sin.

On the other hand, there are other sins where we change. We do teshuva but not from our heart, not from our emotions, but we do teshuva from our intellect, and that happens when, for example, a person wants to be consistent. He feels that he is being inconsistent on certain things. He does not really feel so bad about the sins but at least he is sending his children to Hebrew school, to the day school, and what they are learning does not correspond to what is going on at home so he feels that he has to change to make the things constant, or it could be that he had small pangs of conscience, but it really is more an intellectual thing. For

example, if a person owes money, he cheated the government on some taxes and he feels it is not right, and, therefore, he send in some more money. I am reminded of the story they tell about a man who owed the government quite a bit of money, and one night he could not sleep so he wrote out a check and sent it to the IRS and said, "Please accept this \$1000 check. If I still can't sleep tomorrow, I'll send you the rest." In other words, there are certain times where we change. We do teshuva not out of a deep felt sense of guilt, but we do it because we know it is not right. We do it with our intellect. Our intellect combines with our will and overcomes our Yetzer Hora. Which way is the best way of teshuva? There is a dispute among the rabbis, but that is why the rabbis say that we are talking about the Chesed Shel Emes, that G-d judges with Chesed and Emes. The reason for that is G-d gives us an opportunity to do teshuva with our emotions, which is Chesed, and He gives us an opportunity to do teshuva with Emes, with the truth, which applies to our intellect. We are called upon to do teshuva with both our senses. Our emotions are not evil and our intellect is not good. Emotions can be used for good or bad and so could our intellect be used for good or bad. It is important that we do teshuva. It is important that we make sure that we return to the right path.

That is why in the first chapter of the Rambam he talks about the past because when it comes to the intellect it is the past which is the motivating force. It is the past. You have not done exactly right in the past and you want to correct it and do better in the future, while in the case of the emotions it is the future which is really the motivating force. We are not so concerned that you are going to repeat this act anymore, but we are concerned that he should not feel this pain anymore so he wants to be pure in the future. That is, of course, why on Yom Kippur we talk about two different kinds of teshuva. We talk about the kind of teshuva which brings Selicha and Mechila and Kapora and when we ask that our sins be forgiven on Yom Kippur we mention first Selicha, then Mechila, and then Kapora. Selicha means that we ask for the maximum. We want to be pure inside because our sins not

only do they Mechaya us all, they make us fit for punishment, but they also Metamee us, they also make us feel unclean. A person wants to feel pure about himself. He wants to rid himself from the guilt of the past and go on to the future. We ask G-d, if You cannot give us this feeling of purity, at least give us Mechila, and Mechila means, at least, G-d, make sure that our punishment is foregone, and if You cannot, G-d, forgive all our punishment, at least give us Kapora, and Kapora here means in the sense that we have made restitution, G-d, at least mitigate our punishment. Don't make our punishment so rough. That is what we are looking for here. Ultimately we are looking to be able to feel pure inside again. That, of course, is the concern especially about the person who has done teshuva out of emotional reasons. Every time he thinks about the past it makes him shudder because it so reviles him, his own sin, and he, himself, does not feel pure about himself. This is why, of course, we read here that G-d testifies upon him, the Knower of all the Secrets, that he will not return to this sin forever. Now it is possible, too, that after he begins to feel pure again with himself that he will once again let himself be overcome by the desire to do evil and even though he was so emotionally drained by the original sin that he does not even want to think about it again it is possible that he could go back and do it again. The other case where we are talking about the sin that came from not really having that many pangs of conscience about it but that he decided that it was not the right way to live and was not the right example for his children and so forth. There is a possibility that he could backslide again, too. I remember the story about an American Mafia-type person who on television told everybody that for the last 3 years he had been straight and had not been involved in any Mafia activities. However, if he would lose all his money he would, of course, go back to Mafia activities because being without money would cause him greater pain than doing Mafia-type activities. We can understand how it is possible that the person who does teshuva because of an intellectual perception, that it would be easy for him to slide back in the future as the Mafioso did and

to repeat his sin again, but the person who is doing teshuva because he is so disgusted with himself it is harder to understand why he has to make the declaration for the future.

What's more, afterwards it says, "And he should testify him, the one who knows all the secrets, that he will not return to this sin forever." What does that mean? The rabbis explain that this means that G-d, Himself, does not testify but that He brings witnesses to this man, that this man would no longer want to do these evil things and that the witnesses who testify against him are the heaven and the earth because Moshe Rabbeinu said in the Torah portion that we read this morning, "Haazinu, listen heavens and I will speak, and listen the earth to the words of my mouth," that G-d, Himself, says that human beings need to be attached, that human beings need to be attached to a people and to a family and they need to have goals, that the heaven testifies to them whether they are able to have goals in the world, whether they are made to feel that their life makes a difference, and they have to feel that they are attached to a people and to a cause and that they are trying to bring about the world's betterment. People cannot just live selfishly because it is not unique to live selfishly. Each of us must feel that our life has a purpose and meaning, and that, of course, is what teshuva gives us. It tells us, "Listen, you are still important in spite of the mistakes that you made in the past. You can still accomplish great things." Therefore, the person who calls the heaven and earth to testify says that this person in the future can avoid these type of errors, and although a person feel revolted from himself, that they can start out with a clean slate. Also, we know that there are two kinds of teshuva. There is a teshuva from fear and a teshuva from love, and many times people will not want to do anything because they are afraid of the pangs of conscience which may strike them, but then there is even a higher form of teshuva, and that is the teshuva that says that I am not just afraid of these pangs of conscience. I am not just afraid of being disgusted about myself but because I know that this also is the right thing

to do. I know that this gives me added joy and great happiness, that this is something that I should try and strive to do. That's why we learn the contradiction in the Rambam. Again in the first chapter he talks about the fact that if a person does certain sins, if he violates a positive commandment and does teshuva he is immediately forgiven. If it is a negative commandment which does not have Korais, then the teshuva waits until Yom Kippur, and if he does a sin which has Korais, excision, or gets the death penalty for it, then teshuva on Yom Kippur will depend upon further pangs which will come upon him and then he would be given forgiveness, while in the second chapter the Rambam says immediately when you do teshuva you are immediately forgiven. In fact, he says more than that last night you were hated before G-d and you were disgusting and foreign but today you are loved and you are considered a friend so you do not have to wait at all. The difference is one time you do teshuva from fear, when you are afraid of the consequences of your sin, that either you are going to be caught by human beings or you are afraid of your own conscience or you are afraid of the bad things that will happen because you know that it is the right thing, and we all know that the teshuva that we do out of love can change even our sins to merits. Why? Because usually when a person does bad things he uses more energy than to do good things. When you hate somebody you go out of your way to do despicable things to that person. If you love them, you are a friend, that's all. When you see him you say hello. You will do a favor if you are asked, but usually negative emotions are much stronger than positive emotions. Therefore, when a person does teshuva out of love he is able to take these emotions that he used to do bad things and now he can do good things with them. Therefore, we see this, too, in our society where people become Baal Teshuva where before they were involved in the drug culture and other things, and then when they become Baal Teshuvos and they join the yeshiva that they are able to take the talents that they invested in the drug culture and use them for positive. For example, the rock music of the band at the yeshiva is doing great things in order to bring children out of the

drug culture. They are using the same kind of rock music that brought people into it because they know that there is a great power there and that you can use this power for good as well as for bad. We all know that it is important that we do teshuva not just because we are afraid but that we do teshuva because it is a wonderful way of living. It fulfills us so much more when we do the right thing. It brings us ultimately much greater happiness.

The rabbis tell us that when the Jewish people sinned they sinned two ways. They sinned as a member of the Jewish people and as a human being. It is possible as a member of the Jewish people but not to sin as a human being. For example, let's say I give charity. I give a lot of money to the symphony and the Red Cross and to every other non-Jewish charity but he gave nothing to the Jewish people. I have not sinned as a human being since I have fulfilled my charitable obligations, but I have sinned as a Jew. I have not helped my own people. Many times it has happened that a person can sin as a Jew and not as a human being, or vice versa. He can be a Jew and give charity to Jewish causes and help the Jewish people but, at the same time, he can be a mean person. If he forecloses on widows and orphans and he does not treat his wife properly or his children properly, then he has sinned as a human being. Ravi says that the day of Yom Kippur, itself, forgives. How can the day of Yom Kippur, itself, forgive without doing any teshuva? The rabbis explain by that that is means that you can be forgiven as a Jew by just showing up to services at Yom Kippur. In fact, one of the sins that the Rambam says cannot be forgiven by the statement that we make on Yom Kippur are things that have Korais to them because if a person does not keep Yom Kippur anymore and he does not keep Pesach anymore he violates all those obligations which tie him to the Jewish people, then he will not be able to stay a Jew anymore. This means excision. Your children will be cut off from the Jewish people. However, if you reattach yourself to the Jewish people by coming to shul on Yom Kippur by attending the Temple service when it stood in the Temple, then you reattach yourself to the Jewish people and you

are forgiven as a Jew. As a human being, though, it is different. As a human being you have to do real teshuva. You have to teshuva either from your emotions or intellect, and the best way is a combination of both. You should be reviled at your sin but you should also know in your head that this is not the right way to act. The rabbis tell us that the Jewish people have three covenants after the covenant of Abraham. They have the covenant on Mount Sinai where we were given the Ten Commandments and the Torah. Then we have the covenant of Moa, in which we also are once again given many of the laws of the Torah, and then we have a covenant which was mentioned in Nitzavim, the third covenant. The first two covenants were given to us because we were Jews, descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is our covenant as part of the Jewish people. In Nitzavim we were given a covenant as individuals and we were given individual responsibility, that now when we sin we sin not just as a member of the Jewish people but also as individuals as well, and we cannot claim that since we are part of the Jewish people we will be forgiven for those sins which we commit against our fellow human being. It is interesting to note that when we come to shul on Yom Kippur we are forgiven for our sins of the Jewish people by just showing up in shul on Yom Kippur. However, we are not forgiven our sins as an individual. That requires that we do teshuva, and that requires that we come before a Beis Din and we say that we are no longer going to do these evil things anymore, and that's why we start out Yom Kippur with Kol Nidre where we stand before a Beis Din of three. Originally the chazzan would be flanked by just two Torahs, which constituted a Beis Din in which we say that we are committed to pray with all sinners, because when we come to shul on Yom Kippur we have to do teshuva not just as a member of the Jewish people by reattaching ourself to the Jewish people, but we have to do teshuva as an individual, too, and we have to be so reviled by our sins that we do not want to repeat them, and we have to have such an intellectual grasp of our sins that we also know that we should not do it in our mind as well as in our heart, and if we know from our mind as well as from our heart that we

should not do these terrible things, we should not hurt people and we should be sensitive to people, and if we pour out our heart to G-d and tell G-d that we are going to try to be better people in the year ahead, then truly we will be forgiven as members of the Jewish people and as individual so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.