

Hilchot Teshuva Study Guide

A study guide containing a full English translation of the text, chapter by chapter summaries with thoughts to ponder, and a full transcription of the Hilchot Teshuva Overview Series delivered by Rav Matis Weinberg *shlita*.

In loving memory of Jenny Morhaim a'h.

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Introduction

Dear Friend

As part of our work as Community Directors at Southgate Synagogue Joanna and I often thought about how best to engage our many members who were not Shul regulars. We wanted to offer an opportunity for authentic engagement with a traditional text for these without facility in Biblical Hebrew. Our response was *SCAMlite*¹, an informal and fun discussion group that met at a civilised 10:30am for good coffee, fresh croissants and decent single malt, and on the first Shabbat of the month worked through another of the ten chapters of *Hilchot Teshuva*, Maimonides' Guide to Repentance. The sessions opened with an introduction to the chapter followed by a one on one discussion session prompted by the 'thoughts to ponder' notes and concluded with a frank, lively and often heated round table discussion.

Launching this initiative in October 2010 at the beginning of the fresh new Jewish year of 5771 was immensely exciting, and I could never have imagined that I would be sitting shiva for my little sister Jenny days later. The months that have followed have been among the darkest and hardest of my life, but it is no exaggeration to say that the sublime delight of watching a traditional text, written in the Middle Ages and dealing with of all things one's response to sin bursting into life has been no less than a beacon of light through the darkness.

This Study Guide is a compilation of the monthly handouts that accompanied these sessions. Each chapter begins with a summary of key points and some suggested thoughts to ponder, and for those wishing to invest more time continues with a full version of the text² and a transcription of the magnificent *Hilchot Teshuva* overview shiurim³ by Rav Matis Weinberg which inspired this project. Any errors in these transcriptions are undoubtedly my own.

I dedicate this study guide to Jenny a'h. Jenny came as close as anyone I have ever met to perfecting the art of lifting a close friend or a stranger on the street with a genuine smile and a warm, heartfelt and softly spoken word of care and concern. Jenny taught me that however desperately ordinary our circumstance and mundane our chore if we can exude the love, care and concern described in *Hilchot Teshuva* then Heaven really can be a place on Earth.

Jenny lived *Hilchot Teshuva*, and I dedicate in love this small attempt to make it come to life for others. My greatest hope is that it may come alive within me.

With much love for a peaceful, prosperous and fulfilling 5772,

Simon Hamilton

September 2011/Ellul 5771

¹ All credit to Raphi Diamond for coining the *SCAMlite* name, a welcome variant of the SCAM (Southgate and Cockfosters Alternative Minyan) brand.

² Courtesy of http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/911887/jewish/Teshuvah.htm

³ See <http://www.thelivingtree.org/index-teshuva.htm>

Chapter One

In which we see that *teshuvah* begins not with any concern for our individual circumstances or motivations but with our acknowledgment and care for reality itself.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

The purpose of *Hilchot Teshuva* is to explain how to achieve *teshuva* (repentance) and to explain the fundamental philosophical concepts associated with it.

- 1.1. If one commits a sin, whether accidentally or deliberately, when one repents it is a mitzvah to say *Viduy* (confession) saying 'O Lord, I have sinned, transgressed and rebelled before You, and have done such and such, and I am ashamed by my actions and will never do it again.' To the extent that one can elaborate on this, one should do so.

Bringing a sacrifice would have no effect unless it was accompanied by *teshuva* and *viduy*, capital punishment would not atone unless the recipient repented and said *viduy*, and one who has paid compensation for a financial damage would not be forgiven until one repents and resolves not to do it again.

- 1.2. The goat sent to Azazel on the Day of Atonement was accompanied by confession by the High Priest and would atone for all sins for which the transgressor had repented, even if they had not confessed, and would atone for minor transgressions even where the transgressor had not repented.
- 1.3. Nowadays we have no Temple, but we still have repentance. Repentance is so powerful it can atone for all sins, even when done on the last day of one's life. The Day of Atonement itself provides atonement.
- 1.4. One who repents after a major transgression requires the passage of time before achieving atonement. Therefore one who repents after transgressing a positive command achieves *kapara* once they are forgiven. One who repents after transgressing a negative command achieves *kapara* when Yom Kippur comes. One who repents after transgressing a command punishable by Karet or the Death penalty will achieve *kapara* when they experience pain in their lives. One who repents after making a *Chillul Hashem* will achieve *kapara* with his death.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER – CHAPTER ONE

1. How would you expect a text on repentance to start?
2. What is surprising about the way that *Hilchot Teshuva* starts? Is the first sentence ‘backwards’?
3. Why does the Rambam say ‘when you do *teshuva*’ and not ‘you must do *teshuva*!’?
4. Why does the text for *Viduy* include all three types of sin, when clearly this is for a particular type of sin, which will not be relevant?
5. Why is only ‘*kapara*’/atonement mentioned here?
6. Is an insincere confession worth saying?
7. Why should the Day of Atonement itself provide atonement?
8. Why may a period of time be needed before achieving ‘atonement’?
9. How would our lives be different if we had a Temple?
10. In 1.4 making others think badly of Jews is considered worse than a sin punishable by death! Isn’t that a bit farfetched?



FULL TEXT – CHAPTER ONE

- 1.1 If a person transgresses any of the mitzvot of the Torah, whether a positive command or a negative command - whether willingly or inadvertently - when he repents, and returns from his sin, he must confess before God, blessed be, He as [Numbers 5:6-7] states: "If a man or a woman commit any of the sins of man... they must confess the sin that they committed."

This refers to a verbal confession. This confession is a positive command. How does one confess: He states: "I implore You, God, I sinned, I transgressed, I committed iniquity before You by doing the following. Behold, I regret and am embarrassed for my deeds. I promise never to repeat this act again." These are the essential elements of the confessional prayer. Whoever confesses profusely and elaborates on these matters is worthy of praise.

Those who bring sin offerings or guilt offerings must also [confess their sins] when they bring their sacrifices for their inadvertent or wilful transgressions. Their sacrifices will not atone for their sins until they repent and make a verbal confession as [Leviticus 5:5] states: "He shall confess the sin he has committed upon it."

Similarly, those obligated to be executed or lashed by the court do not attain atonement through their death or lashing unless they repent and confess. Similarly, someone who injures a colleague or damages his property, does not attain atonement, even though he pays him what he owes until he confesses and makes a commitment never to do such a thing again as implied by the phrase [Numbers, loc. cit.], "any of the sins of man."

- 1.2 Since the goat sent [to Azazel] atones for all of Israel, the High Priest confesses upon it as a spokesman for all of Israel as [Leviticus 16:21] states: "He shall confess upon it all the sins of the children of Israel."

The goat sent to Azazel atones for all the transgressions in the Torah, the severe and the lighter [sins]; those violated intentionally and those transgressed inadvertently; those which [the transgressor] became conscious of and those which he was not conscious of. All are atoned for by the goat sent [to Azazel]. This applies only if one repents. If one does not repent, the goat only atones for the light [sins].

Which are light sins and which are severe ones? The severe sins are those for which one is liable for execution by the court or karet. False and unnecessary oaths are also considered severe sins even though they are not [punished by] karet. [The violation of] the other prohibitions and [the failure to perform] positive commandments that are not punishable by karet are considered light [sins].

- 1.3 At present, when the Temple does not exist and there is no altar of atonement, there remains nothing else aside from Teshuvah. Teshuvah atones for all sins. Even a person who was wicked his whole life and repented in his final moments will not be reminded of any aspect of his wickedness as [Ezekiel 33:12] states "the wickedness of the evil one will not cause him to stumble on the day he repents his wickedness." The essence of Yom Kippur atones for those who repent as [Leviticus 16:30] states: "This day will atone for you."
- 1.4 Even though Teshuvah atones for all [sins] and the essence of Yom Kippur brings atonement, [there are different levels of sin and hence, differences in the degree of atonement.] There are sins that can be atoned for immediately and other sins which can only be atoned for over the course of time. What is implied?

If a person violates a positive command which is not punishable by karet and repents, he will not leave that place before he is forgiven. Concerning these sins, [Jeremiah 3:22] states: "Return, faithless children! I will heal your rebellious acts."

If a person violates a prohibition that is not punishable by karet or execution by the court and repents, Teshuvah has a tentative effect and Yom Kippur brings atonement as [Leviticus, loc. cit. states "This day will atone for you."

If a person violates [sins punishable by] karet or execution by the court and repents, Teshuvah and Yom Kippur have a tentative effect and the sufferings which come upon him complete the atonement. He will never achieve complete atonement until he endures suffering for concerning these [sins, Psalms 89:33] states: "I will punish their transgression with a rod."

When does the above apply: When the desecration of God's name is not involved in the transgression. However, a person who desecrated God's name, even though he repented, Yom Kippur arrived while he continued his repentance, and he experienced suffering, will not be granted complete atonement until he dies. The three: repentance, Yom Kippur, and suffering have a tentative effect and death atones as [Isaiah 22:14] states: "It was revealed in my ears [by] the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity will not be atoned for until you die."

TRANSCRIPTION OF SHIUR BY RAV MATIS WEINBERG SHLITA – CHAPTER ONE

Hilchot Teshuva opens with a remarkable insight, one which markedly differentiates this body of work from all other accounts of how the repentance process is performed. There is no description of the personal journey from being a sinner to being a *Baal Teshuva*. There is no attention paid to the circumstances of the transgression. There is no consideration of one's motivation and a defiant act of spiritual rebellion is therefore treated in exactly the same way as an honest mistake. The only thing we care about is reality itself.

As the book begins with an account of how to address the sin, but without regard for the personal circumstances giving rise to the sin, this chapter therefore deals with how to achieve *kapara*, atonement. *Kapara* is an almost entirely impersonal achievement, meaning simply to 'wipe away'⁴ ones sin. At a later point in this work we will learn how to achieve *selicha* and *mechila*, pardon and forgiveness, which are both profoundly personal.

This teaches us a remarkable insight into the nature of *teshuva* – that it is, in its most fundamental essence a restoration of reality, not a change in the way a human being looks at things. If it was merely a change in the way we look at things it could just be a substitution of one perversion for another perversion. Amazingly, it follows that *teshuva* is not about you at all, and our own personal opinions, emotion and involvement are just as irrelevant to *teshuva* as they were to the sin in the first place. We therefore see the surprising presentation of the different timeframes required for the various levels of *kapara* in paragraph 1.4 which are organized in an objective fashion, making it irrelevant whether a sinner acted completely accidentally or with the deliberate intent of provoking Heaven!

People always want to be better and are always trying to improve themselves but this isn't *teshuva*! *Teshuva* is defined here by our responsiveness to reality rather than our dreams for ourselves, and becomes the process of getting out of one's mind, of looking at reality objectively. From this perspective the moment that one would cry out to Hashem asking for forgiveness for a sins one could imagine Hashem responding saying "isn't it bad enough that you are a sinner – and now you want me to help you as well?! If you have problems so call a psychiatrist! I want you to acknowledge reality and for you to sort your problems out yourself."

Given that the issue is an acknowledgement of reality, astonishingly the confession described in paragraph 1.1 just needs to be said; irrespective of whether one believes it or not! One can understand this by imagining an interchange with a boss who complains bitterly about the standard of a recent report. The employee will of course pledge his total allegiance to the firm, reassuring the boss that his next report will be excellent. Both the boss and the employee know that the interchange is fundamentally meaningless, that the employee has circulated his CV to every recruitment consultant in town and will jump ship just as soon as he gets a better offer, but the dialogue is important as far as both parties align themselves to the company vision and ethos. Similarly *teshuva* has to begin with our simple recognition that we want to engage with reality itself. The *mitzvah* of *teshuva*

⁴ Bereshit 32, 21 describes Jacobs preparations for his showdown with his estranged brother Eisav. Jacob sends waves of gifts to Eisav, hoping that they will 'appease his anger'. Rashi comments: ***I will appease his anger:*** Heb. פָּגַי אֶכְפֹּרָה, *I will do away with his anger (Targum Onkelos). Similarly (Isa. 28:18): "And your treaty with death shall be nullified (וְנִבְטַרְתָּ); (ibid., 47:11) "you shall not be able to rid yourself of it (בְּפִגְרָה)."* This is Aramaic, and there are many instances of it in the Talmud, e.g. (B.M. 24a): "and he wiped (וְכַפֵּר) his hands"; (Gittin 56a): "He wishes to wipe (לְכַפֵּר) His hands on this person." In biblical Hebrew also, the sacred sprinkling basins are called זָהָב כְּפוֹרֵי (Ezra 1:10) because the priest wipes his hands on them at the edge of the sprinkling basin.

described here is the *mitzva* of *vidduy*, confession. Later on in the next the next chapter we will discuss “*Vidduy Peh*” which is confession as articulation, but here we discuss “*Vidduy Lifnei Hashem*” where we address Hashem and engage with reality.

The theme of this chapter is therefore the restoration of reality, and not only does the procedure set out in paragraph 1.4 for addressing the 4 different levels of sin take no account of intent, but interesting we see that an action is required in order to address reality. It would therefore be entirely inconsequential if one were to pray for forgiveness and not bring the *korban* as required. An act is required to address the fact of the warping of the universe that our actions have caused.

There is only one – entirely inappropriate – time that *mechila* (forgiveness) is mentioned in this chapter which is in paragraph 1.4 with the words ‘*If a person violates a positive command which is not punishable by karet and repents, he will not leave that place before he is forgiven.*’ Whilst one can be considered to have harmed existence by violating a negative prohibition, the same cannot be said about the simply not performing a positive command. No act has been performed and no harm has been done. However the fact that one is a person who does not perform positive commandments itself harms the world, and therefore in being forgiven one achieves atonement and a restoration of existence.

The most fundamental level of reality is that the world exists, and we can either confront the reality, or hide from it in childish dreams that G-d would be forgiving. The reason for the awkward structure of the first sentence is so that the beginning words should be ‘*Kol Mitzvot SheBaTorah*’ – ‘*All the commandments in the Torah*’ because it is the commandments and the reality, and not the individual and the circumstances which are the focal point of the first chapter. Once an act has been performed it never goes away unless it is addressed by *teshuva*. We experience the passing of time as in some way reducing the importance of past events but of course there is no passing of time before Hashem, and the events of 50 or 5,000 years ago are as real as the events of today. One can imagine a Rabbi who has authored many great books on the Laws of Shabbat coming before the pearly gates and being shocked to be told that there is no place in Heaven for him; as he accidentally switched a light on Shabbat 43 years ago! The point is that acts which have happened remain a part of ourselves and the world unless we address them with *teshuva*.

Chapter Two

In which we define complete repentance, set out the times at which *teshuva* is particularly appropriate, specify which sins have to be publicized at the time of repentance and explain how to ask forgiveness from someone else.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

- 2.1. Complete repentance is achieved when one has the opportunity to repeat a sin and refrains from doing so. Where one refrains in old age, where one's physical desire is diminished, this is an advantageous but not a complete repentance. One who repents before dying will be forgiven for their sins.
- 2.2. What is repentance? It is the verbal declaration that one will:
 1. Stop performing the act
 2. Remove thoughts of the act from one's mind
 3. Resolve to never repeat the act
- 2.3. The repentance of one who follows this procedure without resolving not to repeat the act is ineffective. One should specify one's transgression when making the declaration.
- 2.4. The repentance process may involve prayer and charity, and even changing one's name or town of residence as a means of demonstrating that one is a new person.
- 2.5. Interpersonal transgressions (but not these between man and G-d) should ideally be confessed in public.
- 2.6. Repentance is always appropriate, however between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur it is accepted immediately.
- 2.7. Yom Kippur is a time of atonement for all, when one is obligated to confess and repent. One should confess on the afternoon before Yom Kippur in case one chokes during the meal and die without having confessed.
- 2.8. If one sins on Yom Kippur itself, one confesses on the subsequent Yom Kippur.
- 2.9. Yom Kippur only atones for sins between man and G-d. For interpersonal sins one must firstly correct the situation and also ask one's fellow for forgiveness. Should they refuse one should ask again in front of three friends, then six and then nine, at which point one should desist from asking any more. One should be willing to ask one's Rabbi one thousand times for forgiveness.
- 2.10. One should be appeasing and wholeheartedly grant forgiveness to those who ask.
- 2.11. If one sins against someone who dies, one should go to their grave with ten people to ask forgiveness. If money needs to be paid back it should be paid to their heirs, or failing that to the Beth Din.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER – CHAPTER TWO

1. Why did chapter one start by defining reality and explaining how to cleanse the world of evil without any mention of personal feelings one may have?
2. In chapter two we begin by defining 'complete *teshuva*' (2,1) but then later define '*teshuva*' (2,3!) Shouldn't it be the other way round?
3. Why does (2,4) speak about 'the repentance process'? Is that a different thing to repentance itself?
4. Is repentance an intellectual or an emotional act?
5. Would the person in (2,1) have done total repentance if the scenario would never have arisen?
6. Isn't the idea of saying confession before Yom Kippur starts (2,7) a bit like saying 'keep Shabbat on Friday just in case you fall under a bus on your way to Shul on Friday night?!'
7. Read (2,10) – do you think there are ever any cases where not forgiving someone is justified?



FULL TEXT – CHAPTER TWO

- 2.1 [Who has reached] complete Teshuvah? A person who confronts the same situation in which he sinned when he has the potential to commit [the sin again], and, nevertheless, abstains and does not commit it because of his Teshuvah alone and not because of fear or a lack of strength.

For example, a person engaged in illicit sexual relations with a woman. Afterwards, they met in privacy, in the same country, while his love for her and physical power still persisted, and nevertheless, he abstained and did not transgress. This is a complete Baal-Teshuvah. This was implied by King Solomon in his statement [Ecclesiastes 12:1] "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, [before the bad days come and the years draw near when you will say: `I have no desire for them.'"]

If he does not repent until his old age, at a time when he is incapable of doing what he did before, even though this is not a high level of repentance, he is a Baal-Teshuvah.

Even if he transgressed throughout his entire life and repented on the day of his death and died in repentance, all his sins are forgiven as [Ecclesiastes, op. cit.:2] continues: "Before the sun, the light, the moon, or the stars are darkened and the clouds return after the rain..." - This refers to the day of death. Thus, we can infer that if one remembers his Creator and repents before he dies, he is forgiven.

- 2.2 What constitutes Teshuvah? That a sinner should abandon his sins and remove them from his thoughts, resolving in his heart, never to commit them again as [Isaiah 55:7] states "May the wicked abandon his ways..." Similarly, he must regret the past as [Jeremiah 31:18] states: "After I returned, I regretted."

[He must reach the level where] He who knows the hidden will testify concerning him that he will never return to this sin again as [Hoshea 14:4] states: "We will no longer say to the work of our hands: `You are our gods.'"

He must verbally confess and state these matters which he resolved in his heart.

- 2.3 Anyone who verbalizes his confession without resolving in his heart to abandon [sin] can be compared to [a person] who immerses himself [in a mikvah] while [holding the carcass of] a lizard in his hand. His immersion will not be of avail until he casts away the carcass.

This principle is implied by the statement, [Proverbs 28:13], "He who confesses and forsakes [his sins] will be treated with mercy." It is necessary to mention particularly one's sins as evidenced by [Moses' confession, Exodus 32:31]: "I appeal to You. The people have committed a terrible sin by making a golden idol."

- 2.4 Among the paths of repentance is for the penitent to:
- constantly call out before God, crying and entreating;
 - to perform charity according to his potential;
 - to separate himself far from the object of his sin;
 - to change his name, as if to say "I am a different person and not the same one who sinned;"
 - to change his behavior in its entirety to the good and the path of righteousness; and f) to travel in exile from his home. Exile atones for sin because it causes a person to be submissive, humble, and meek of spirit.

- 2.5 It is very praiseworthy for a person who repents to confess in public and to make his sins known to others, revealing the transgressions he committed against his colleagues. He should tell them: "Though I sinned against so and so, committing the following misdeeds.... Behold, I repent and express my regret." Anyone who, out of pride, conceals his sins and does not reveal them will not achieve complete repentance as [Proverbs 28:13] states: "He who conceals his sins will not succeed."

When does the above apply? In regard to sins between man and man. However, in regard to sins between man and God, it is not necessary to publicize one's [transgressions]. Indeed, revealing them is arrogant. Rather, a person should repent before God, blessed be He, and specifically mention his sins before Him. In public, he should make a general confession. It is to his benefit not to reveal his sins as [Psalms 32:1] states: "Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

- 2.6 Even though repentance and calling out [to God] are desirable at all times, during the ten days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, they are even more desirable and will be accepted immediately as [Isaiah 55:6] states: "Seek God when He is to be found."

When does the above apply? To an individual. However, in regard to a community, whenever they repent and cry out wholeheartedly, they are answered immediately as [Deuteronomy 4:7] states: "[What nation is so great that they have God close to them,] as God, our Lord, is whenever we call Him."

- 2.7 Yom Kippur is the time of Teshuvah for all, both individuals and the community at large. It is the apex of forgiveness and pardon for Israel. Accordingly, everyone is obligated to repent and confess on Yom Kippur. The mitzvah of the confession of Yom Kippur begins on the day's eve, before one eats [the final meal], lest one choke to death in the meal before confessing. Although a person confessed before eating, he should confess again in the evening service, Yom Kippur night, and similarly, repeat the confession in the morning, Musaf, afternoon, and Ne'ilah services. At which point [in the service] should one confess? An individual confesses after the Amidah and the Chazan confesses in the midst of the Amidah, in the fourth blessing.

- 2.8 The confessional prayer customarily recited by all Israel is: "For we have all sinned...." This is the essence of the confessional prayer.

Sins which were confessed on one Yom Kippur should be confessed on another Yom Kippur even though one remains steadfast in his repentance, as [Psalms 51:5] states: "I acknowledge my transgressions and my sins are always before me."

- 2.9 Teshuvah and Yom Kippur only atone for sins between man and God; for example, a person who ate a forbidden food or engaged in forbidden sexual relations, and the like. However, sins between man and man; for example, someone who injures a colleague, curses a colleague, steals from him, or the like will never be forgiven until he gives his colleague what he owes him and appeases him.

[It must be emphasized that] even if a person restores the money that he owes [the person he wronged], he must appease him and ask him to forgive him.

Even if a person only upset a colleague by saying [certain] things, he must appease him and approach him [repeatedly] until he forgives him.

If his colleague does not desire to forgive him, he should bring a group of three of his friends and approach him with them and request [forgiveness]. If [the wronged party] is not appeased, he should repeat the process a second and third time. If he [still] does not want [to forgive him], he may let him alone and need not pursue [the matter further]. On the contrary, the person who refuses to grant forgiveness is the one considered as the sinner.

[The above does not apply] if [the wronged party] was one's teacher. [In that instance,] a person should continue seeking his forgiveness, even a thousand times, until he forgives him.

- 2.10 It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and refuse to be appeased. Rather, he should be easily pacified, but hard to anger. When the person who wronged him asks for forgiveness, he should forgive him with a complete heart and a willing spirit. Even if he aggravated and wronged him severely, he should not seek revenge or bear a grudge.

This is the path of the seed of Israel and their upright spirit. In contrast, the insensitive gentiles do not act in this manner. Rather, their wrath is preserved forever. Similarly, because the Gibeonites did not forgive and refused to be appeased, [II Samuel 21:2] describes them, as follows: "The Gibeonites are not among the children of Israel."

- 2.11 If a person wronged a colleague and the latter died before he could ask him for forgiveness, he should take ten people and say the following while they are standing before the colleague's grave: "I sinned against God, the Lord of Israel, and against this person by doing the following to him...."

If he owed him money, he should return it to his heirs. If he is unaware of the identity of his heirs, he should place [the sum] in [the hands of] the court and confess.

TRANSCRIPTION OF SHIUR BY RAV MATIS WEINBERG SHLITA – CHAPTER TWO

Review of the First Perek

Hilchot Teshuva began from the surprising perspective of the sin itself, rather than the sinner. It set out how to address evil *per se*, irrespective of any personal implications this may have for the perpetrator. For that reason the first chapter spoke in terms of attaining *kaparah*, which means to cleanse or wipe clean, and is achieved in a functional rather than a personal capacity. The chapter addresses how to cleanse the world, rather than oneself of evil, and therefore describes the different timespans needed for different levels of sin to achieve *kaparah*.

A person's concern should therefore be to cleanse the world of the evil that one has introduced when bringing a *korban* (sacrifice). Should one do *teshuva* whilst bringing the *korban*, one will achieve personal *kapara* as well as addressing the evil. It is the world, not the sinner which is important, but the sinner can become relevant, can enter the scenario as an adjunct, by his *teshuva*.

Why is it that on the one hand even one who repents on Yom Kippur still needs a *korban* or *malkus* (lashes) to achieve *kapara* "but in this day and age we have only repentance" and on the other hand there is an aspect of Yom Kippur which itself achieves *kapara*: "the very aspect of the Day of Atonement atones for penitents?" (1,3) Is Yom Kippur a Day of Atonement of a Day for Atonement?

In Temple times Yom Kippur was a Day of Atonement, people had ways to address evil and *teshuva* would function in a broad way, allowing the *korban* one brought to affect one personally as well as cleanse the world of the evil. Nowadays Yom Kippur is reduced to a Day for Atonement; we no longer have ways to address evil, but we can address ourselves through *teshuva* when we allow Yom Kippur to affect us personally.

The beginning of Hilchot Teshuva therefore teaches that one's concern must be to cleanse the world of the evil which exists, rather than to cleanse oneself of the evil one has committed. Having a personal concern for the evil is not only solipsistic, it is as ineffective and inane as one who has detonated nuclear weapons, or who has been diagnosed with cancer, reacting by taking aspirin. When we realise that our actions really do make a difference we become no longer concerned by simply wanting to be a better person (which fundamentally is a primal and selfish urge) but our concern becomes to cleanse the world by cleansing ourselves of the evil that has been committed.

Getting Personal

If the first chapter establishes why one should do *teshuva*, the second chapter establishes how to do *teshuva*, opening with the words "what is complete *teshuva*?" The perspective therefore changes and now begins to discuss *teshuva* from the perspective of the performer. Doing *teshuva* is defined here in chapter two as one's personal responsiveness to sin, and therefore the personal terms of *selicha* and *mechila* and now introduced.

The first chapter began with the words "when one does *teshuva*, and repents from ones sin" implying that there are two steps to the *teshuva* process. The first step is doing *teshuva* which is an intellectual internal change. The second step is the mechanisms and ways for doing *teshuva*, which are the emotions of how one feels and ones distance from the Creator.

Teshuva Defined

The second perek opens with the question "what is complete *teshuva*?" (2,1) which is a mad

question given that in a few lines we will be asked for a definition of *teshuva* itself: “what is teshuva?” (2,3)

The second chapter therefore is beginning with the observation that when one performs an act one not only changes reality, but one changes one’s own neural pathways as well. Therefore a person who sleeps with a woman and responds by improving the purity of his thoughts, guarding his eyes etc not only has not done *teshuva* but would probably sleep with her again given the opportunity:

“If one slept with a woman, and then had another opportunity to sleep with her, if he was still attracted to her, was still in good health and was in the same location as before and desists - he has repented completely.”

What if he never met her again but desisted from sleeping with a woman far more attractive – has he then done *teshuva*?! The answer is no, because *teshuva* is changing one’s neural pathway, mentally returning to the exact scenario and resolving never to repeat the action. It can only ever be achieved by the reconstruction of the original scenario.

One’s drive towards sin is more than an intellectual process, it is a function of our evolutionary drives. Therefore in order for *teshuva* to achieve what it needs to, we need to utilise the full spectrum of the drives within us in our response to sin. Only when a sin makes us feel so down, so dark, so remote from the person we know can and should be doing we are engaging in a real and holistic way with our sin, not because we are concerned that we will lose our portion in the World to Come, but because the act itself was wrong.

It is in this personal context that the *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*, The Ten Days of Repentance, are introduced. Rosh HaShana is the celebration of the Creation of a physical world, where the Creator comes down and engages us in a physical way, and where we use all our Freudian and evolutionary drives to approach Him. Yom Kippur therefore emerges as the end point of this process, marking the final opportunity to etch out in our hearts and minds a vision of the life we see we should be living.

If a guy breaks someone’s nose and pays for his nose job and compensates him for the pain and embarrassment caused, he may have addressed the sin he has committed. However it would be crazy for him to say sorry to G-d before saying sorry to the victim of his abuse! Therefore we are only forgiven on Yom Kippur when we ourselves have asked others for forgiveness. Yom Kippur should be using you, not you using Yom Kippur.

We can now answer the question and define *teshuva*. We have seen that there is changing reality and changing oneself and these are two different actions. *Teshuva Gemura* is perfect *teshuva*, which changes reality itself, removing evil from the world, hardwiring our brains and healing our neural pathways. It is achieved by that infinitesimal recreation of the crime scene, demonstrating one’s recreation to the Creator. On a lower level is the *teshuva* one does to become forgiven, to make one feel better. It is helpful, but the facts and reality that one is not the person that he could have been has not been addressed.

Letting Go

Teshuva itself is defined as letting go of the sin (3,3) and one who has not done this, but goes through the motions of repentance is like a man going to the mikva to purify himself with an impure object in his hand – the repentance is completely ineffective. What does letting go mean and how does one do it?

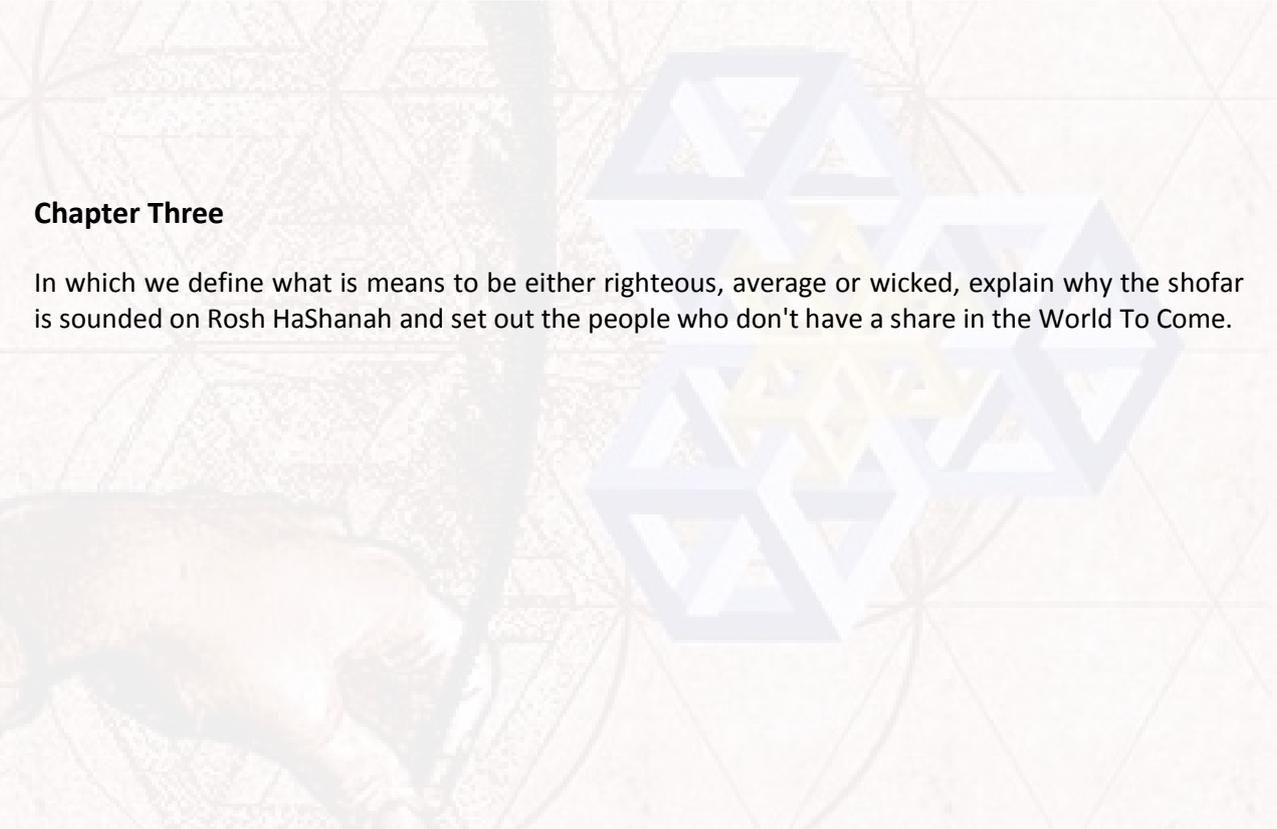
Azivas HaChet the act of letting go of a sin is a lofty and incredibly difficult thing to do. We

think of doing *teshuva* as deciding for now not to do something (I'm going to keep Shabbat this week) but fundamentally we keep the option open to us of changing our mind again. The man in our earlier example who decides not to sleep with the woman again, but still would love to, has not let go. Letting go is the hardest thing to do because it is declaring that repeating that act will never have a place in our vision of reality.

We find death so shaking and disturbing because it is just so final, in contrast to any decision we make in which we feel can be reversed should we change our minds. Letting go means literally letting the option of sleeping with that woman die, it means that the option of going back and performing a sin again is as impossible as speaking to the person you have just sat shiva for. The option of repeating the sin is dead, is over and has disappeared from the world.

The *Gemara (Avodah Zara 17a)* relates a very peculiar story. It talks about a man, Elazar ben Durdia, who slept with every prostitute in the world. He once heard about a particular famous and expensive prostitute in a city overseas. Right before he cohabited with the woman, she remarked that there was no way Elazar would ever receive *Teshuva* if he went through with this act. Elazar was heartbroken and distraught, and immediately went outside and asked the mountains and other parts of the earth to pray for him. However, none of them would agree to intercede for him. Upon realizing that no one else would pray for him, he cried and sat in the foetal position and cried so much that he died. A heavenly voice thereupon announced that Elazar had received a share in *Olam Haba* and earned the title of Rabbi.

The reason why new years' resolutions never last is because we are not willing to let our previous mindset die. Rabbi Elazar ben Durdia died because sleeping with prostitutes was so much a part of who he was that when he let the option of sleeping again with a prostitute die, he himself died.



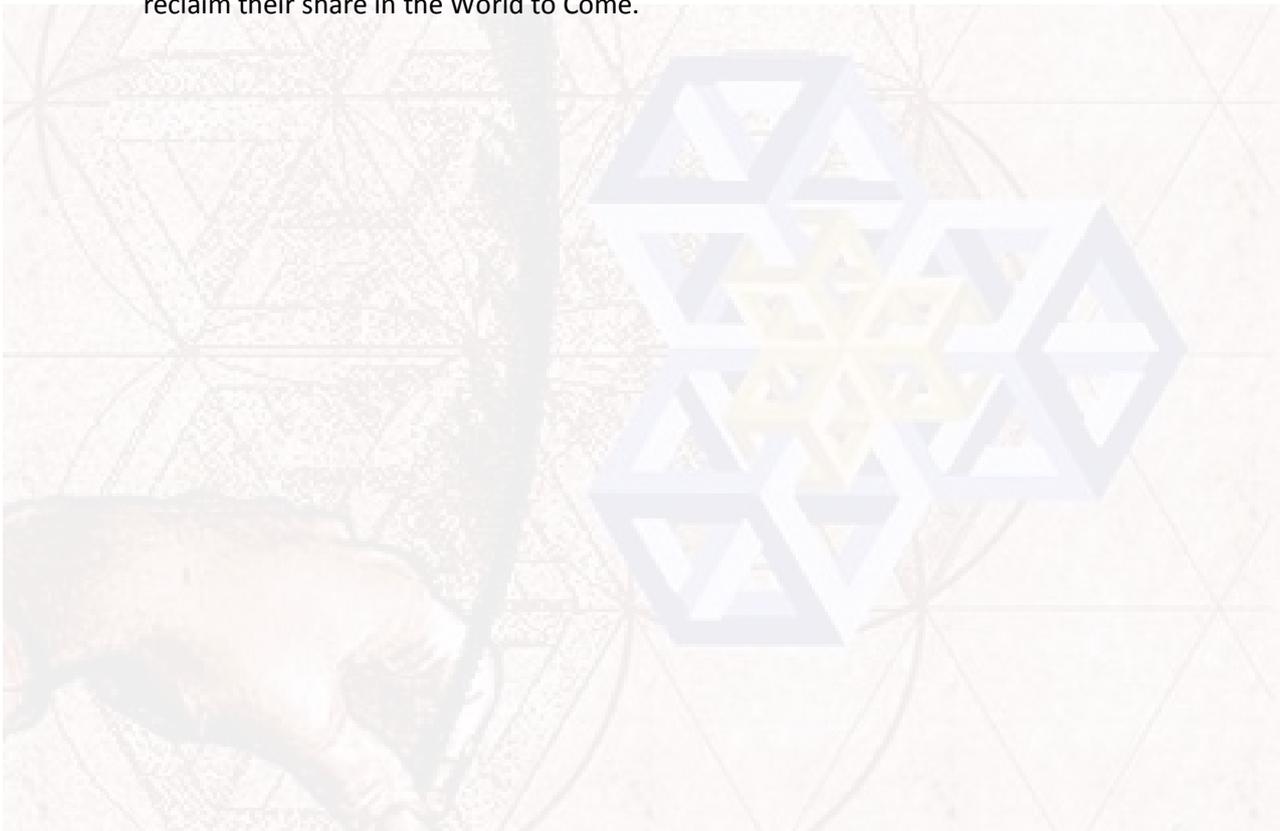
Chapter Three

In which we define what it means to be either righteous, average or wicked, explain why the shofar is sounded on Rosh HaShanah and set out the people who don't have a share in the World To Come.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

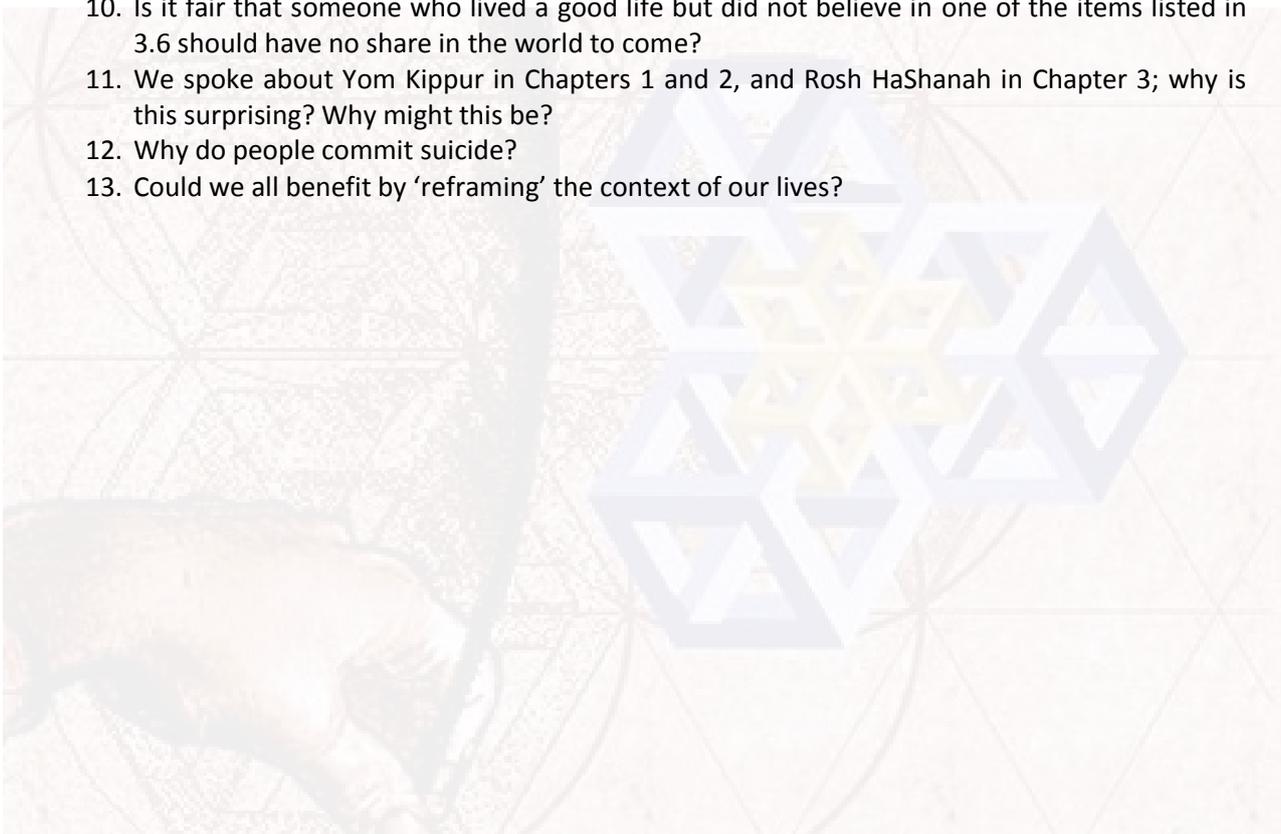
- 3.1. One whose merits are greater than their sins is righteous, whose merits equal their sins is average, and whose merits are less than their sins is wicked.
- 3.2. A person whose sins are more numerous than their merits will die because of their wickedness. Countries with sins more numerous than their merits will be destroyed. Only God can make this calculation because some merits equate to many sins, and vice versa.
- 3.3. Somebody who is casual about fulfilling mitzvot, regrets achieving merits, wants to know what he will gain from them and regrets having done them in the first place will be judged to have no merits at all. Judgement occurs at the end of one's life, and annually on Rosh HaShanah, when the righteous are inscribed for life, the wicked inscribed for death and the average held in suspense until Yom Kippur when if they repented they are inscribed for life.
- 3.4. The message of the Shofar on Rosh HaShanah is to wake up, remember the truth and focus on what really matters in life. One should imagine that oneself, and the entire world have the exact same number of merits and sins, such that one additional merit brings personal and global salvation. Between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur it is customary to give charity, increase ones good deeds and commence Selichot before daybreak.
- 3.5. Hashem wishes to find our merits greater than our transgressions and therefore if they would be exactly equal He will pardon the first and second transgressions and count only from the third, to classify the person as righteous. However if among a person's transgressions is never putting on tefilin than He will classify the person as evil. All Jews and righteous gentiles have a share in the World to Come.
- 3.6. The following have no share in the World to Come: An infidel; a heretic; one who denies the Torah; one who denies that there will be a Resurrection; one who denies that there will be a Redemption; one who converts from Judaism; one who causes a lot of people to sin; one who withdraws from communal ways; one who publicly sins in a defiant way like Jehoiakim did; an informer [against Jews]; one who instils fear in the congregation but not in the Name of God; a murderer; one who relates *Lashon Ha'Rah*; and one who pulls back his foreskin [in order to cover his brit milah].
- 3.7. Five beliefs classify one as an infidel; that there is no God, that there is more than one God, that God has a physical body, that God did not create everything and one who worships the stars.
- 3.8. Three beliefs classify one as a heretic; denying the concept of prophecy, denying the prophecy of Moses, denying God's knowledge of our actions.
- 3.9. Three beliefs classify one as denying the Torah; that it is not Divine, that its explanations are invalid and that its commandments have subsequently been substituted for others.
- 3.10. There are two types of 'opposer,' either one who continually publically transgresses one particular Mitzva, or one who abandons the entire Torah at times of persecution.

- 3.11. 'Causing others to sin' means committing one colossal sin, abolishing commandments, forcing or misleading others into transgressing.
- 3.12. 'Withdrawing from communal ways' means distancing oneself from the community.
- 3.13. 'Informing' means implicating another Jew so that they are in either physical or financial danger.
- 3.14. 'Installing fear into the community but not in the name of God' is where one is motivated by personal honour.
- 3.15. The above have no share in the world to come. In addition, one should keep away from these who: use derogatory nicknames, embarrass others, disgrace the Sages, and desecrate the festivals or the sacrifices. Nevertheless everyone can always repent and reclaim their share in the World to Come.



THOUGHTS TO PONDER – CHAPTER THREE

1. Chapter 3 opens with (the mind-blowing news!) that there is a concept of each individual having merits and transgressions, and we are judged according to how many of each we have. Why did we need to be told this at all? Why wait until chapter 3 to tell us?!
2. How can something as complex and multifaceted as a life be reduced to a list of good and bad deeds for weighing up on scales?
3. If we are judged annually on Rosh HaShanah why is it necessary to be judged again at the end of one's life (and again at the end of days)?
4. Do you agree with 3.2? Do insurance companies?!
5. What's the point of being judged annually if we are judged at the end of our lives?
6. What is the message of the Shofar?
7. Is it relevant today?
8. Why is it relevant to Rosh HaShanah?
9. Why does Hashem 'play' with the system to find us worthy and righteous?
10. Is it fair that someone who lived a good life but did not believe in one of the items listed in 3.6 should have no share in the world to come?
11. We spoke about Yom Kippur in Chapters 1 and 2, and Rosh HaShanah in Chapter 3; why is this surprising? Why might this be?
12. Why do people commit suicide?
13. Could we all benefit by 'reframing' the context of our lives?



FULL TEXT – CHAPTER THREE

- 3.1 Each and every person has merits and sins. A person whose merits exceed his sins is [termed] righteous. A person whose sins exceed his merits is [termed] wicked. If [his sins and merits] are equal, he is termed a Beinoni.

The same applies to an entire country. If the merits of all its inhabitants exceed their sins, it is [termed] righteous. If their sins are greater, it is [termed] wicked. The same applies to the entire world.

- 3.2 If a person's sins exceed his merits, he will immediately die because of his wickedness as [Jeremiah 30:14] states: "[I have smitten you...] for the multitude of your transgressions." Similarly, a country whose sins are great will immediately be obliterated as implied by [Genesis 18:20]: "The outcry of Sodom and Amorah is great...."

In regard to the entire world as well, were its [inhabitants'] sins to be greater than their merits, they would immediately be destroyed as [Genesis 6:5] relates: "God saw the evil of man was great... [and God said: 'I will destroy man....']"

This reckoning is not calculated [only] on the basis of the number of merits and sins, but also [takes into account] their magnitude. There are some merits which outweigh many sins as implied by [I Kings 14:13]: "Because in him, there was found a good quality." In contrast, a sin may outweigh many merits as [Ecclesiastes 9:18] states: "One sin may obscure much good."

The weighing [of sins and merits] is carried out according to the wisdom of the Knowing God. He knows how to measure merits against sins.

- 3.3 Anyone who changes his mind about the mitzvot he has performed and regrets the merits [he has earned], saying in his heart: "What value was there in doing them? I wish I hadn't performed them" - loses them all and no merit is preserved for him at all as [Ezekiel 33:12] states "The righteousness of the upright will not save him on the day of his transgression." This only applies to one who regrets his previous [deeds].

Just as a person's merits and sins are weighed at the time of his death, so, too, the sins of every inhabitant of the world together with his merits are weighed on the festival of Rosh HaShanah. If one is found righteous, his [verdict] is sealed for life. If one is found wicked, his [verdict] is sealed for death. A Beinoni's verdict remains tentative until Yom Kippur. If he repents, his [verdict] is sealed for life. If not, his [verdict] is sealed for death.

- 3.4 Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a decree, it contains an allusion. It is as if [the shofar's call] is saying:

Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator. Those who forget the truth in the vanities of time and throughout the entire year, devote their energies to vanity and emptiness which will not benefit or save: Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds and let every one of you abandon his evil path and thoughts.

Accordingly, throughout the entire year, a person should always look at himself as equally balanced between merit and sin and the world as equally balanced between merit and sin. If he performs one sin, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of guilt and

brings destruction upon himself.

[On the other hand,] if he performs one mitzvah, he tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of merit and brings deliverance and salvation to himself and others. This is implied by [Proverbs 10:25] "A righteous man is the foundation of the world," i.e., he who acted righteously, tipped the balance of the entire world to merit and saved it.

For these reasons, it is customary for all of Israel to give profusely to charity, perform many good deeds, and be occupied with mitzvot from Rosh HaShanah until Yom Kippur to a greater extent than during the remainder of the year.

During these ten days, the custom is for everyone to rise [while it is still] night and pray in the synagogues with heart-rending words of supplication until daybreak.

3.5 When a person's sins are being weighed against his merits, [God] does not count a sin that was committed only once or twice. [A sin] is only [counted] if it was committed three times or more.

Should it be found that [even] those sins committed more than three times outweigh a person's merits, the sins that were committed twice [or less] are also added and he is judged for all of his sins.

If his merits are equal to [or greater than the amount of] his sins committed which were committed more than three times, [God] forgives his sins one after the other, i.e., the third sin [is forgiven because] it is considered as a first sin, for the two previous sins were already forgiven. Similarly, after the third sin is forgiven, the fourth sin is considered as a "first" [sin and is forgiven according to the same principle]. The same [pattern is continued] until [all his sins] are concluded.

When does the above apply? In regard to an individual as can be inferred from [Job 33:29] "All these things, God will do twice or three times with a man." However, in regard to a community, [retribution for] the first, second, and third sins is held in abeyance as implied by [Amos 2:6] "For three sins of Israel, [I will withhold retribution,] but for the fourth, I will not withhold it." When a reckoning [of their merits and sins] is made according to the above pattern, the reckoning begins with the fourth [sin].

[As mentioned above,] a Beinoni [is one whose scale is equally balanced between merit and sin]. However, if among his sins is [the neglect of the mitzvah of] tefillin [to the extent that] he never wore them even once, he is judged according to his sins. He will, nevertheless, be granted a portion in the world to come.

Similarly, all the wicked whose sins are greater [than their merits] are judged according to their sins, but they are granted a portion in the world to come for all Israel have a share in the world to come as [Isaiah 60:21] states "Your people are all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever." "The land" is an analogy alluding to "the land of life," i.e., the world to come. Similarly, the "pious of the nations of the world" have a portion in the world to come.

3.6 The following individuals do not have a portion in the world to come. Rather, their [souls] are cut off and they are judged for their great wickedness and sins, forever:

- the Minim,
- the Epicursim,
- those who deny the Torah,

- those who deny the resurrection of the dead and the coming of the [Messianic] redeemer,
- those who rebel [against God],
- those who cause the many to sin,
- those who separate themselves from the community,
- those who proudly commit sins in public as Jehoyakim did,
- those who betray Jews to gentile authorities,
- those who cast fear upon the people for reasons other than the service of God,
- murderers,
- slanderers,
- one who extends his foreskin [so as not to appear circumcised].

3.7 Five individuals are described as Minim:

- one who says there is no God nor ruler of the world;
- one who accepts the concept of a ruler, but maintains that there are two or more;
- one who accepts that there is one Master [of the world], but maintains that He has a body or form;
- one who maintains that He was not the sole First Being and Creator of all existence;
- one who serves a star, constellation, or other entity so that it will serve as an intermediary between him and the eternal Lord.

Each of these five individuals is a Min.

3.8 Three individuals are described as Epicursim:

- one who denies the existence of prophecy and maintains that there is no knowledge communicated from God to the hearts of men;
- one who disputes the prophecy of Moses, our teacher;'
- one who maintains that the Creator is not aware of the deeds of men.

Each of these three individuals is an Epicurus.

There are three individuals who are considered as one "who denies the Torah":

- a) one who says Torah, even one verse or one word, is not from God. If he says: "Moses made these statements independently," he is denying the Torah.
- b) one who denies the Torah's interpretation, the oral law, or disputes [the authority of] its spokesmen as did Tzadok and Beitus.
- c) one who says that though the Torah came from God, the Creator has replaced one mitzvah with another one and nullified the original Torah, like the Arabs [and the Christians].
- d. Each of these three individuals is considered as one who denies the Torah.

3.9 Among Israel, there are two categories of apostates: an apostate in regard to a single mitzvah and an apostate in regard to the entire Torah.

An apostate in regard to a single mitzvah is someone who has made a practice of willfully committing a particular sin [to the point where] he is accustomed to committing it and his deeds are public knowledge. [This applies] even though [the sin] is one of the minor ones. For example, someone who has made a practice of constantly wearing sha'atnez or cutting off his sideburns so that it appears that, in regard to him, it is as if this mitzvah has been nullified entirely. Such a person is considered an apostate in regard to that matter. This applies [only] if he [commits the sin] with the intent of angering God.

An example of an apostate in regard to the entire Torah is one who turn to the faith of the gentiles when they enact [harsh] decrees [against the Jews] and clings to them, saying: "What value do I have in clinging to Israel while they are debased and pursued. It's better to cling to those who have the upper hand." Such an individual is an apostate in regard to the entire Torah.

- 3.10 [The category of] "those who cause the many to sin" includes those who cause them to commit a severe sin like Jeroboam, Tzadok, or Beitus; and also, those who cause them to commit a slight sin, even the nullification of a positive command.

It includes [both] those who force others to sin like Menasheh who would kill the Jews if they did not worship idols and those who entice others and lead them astray.

- 3.11 A person who separates himself from the community [may be placed in this category] even though he has not transgressed any sins. A person who separates himself from the congregation of Israel and does not fulfill mitzvot together with them, does not take part in their hardships, or join in their [communal] fasts, but rather goes on his own individual path as if he is from another nation and not [Israel], does not have a portion in the world to come.

"Those who proudly commit sins in public as Jehoyakim did," whether they commit slight sins or severe ones, have no portion in the world to come. Such behavior is referred to as "acting brazen-facedly against the Torah," for he acted insolently, in open [defiance], without feeling any shame despite the Torah's words.

- 3.12 There are two categories of "those who betray Jews to gentiles:" one who betrays a colleague to the gentiles so that they may kill him or beat him; and one who gives over a colleague's money to gentiles or to a person who commandeers property and is, therefore, considered like a gentile. Neither of the two has a portion in the world to come

- 3.13 "Those who cast fear upon the people for reasons other than the service of God" - This refers to one who rules the community with a strong hand and [causes] them to revere and fear him. His intent is only for his own honor and none of his desires are for God's honor; for example, the gentile kings.

- 3.14 All the twenty four individuals listed above will not receive a portion in the world to come even though they are Jewish.

There are other sins which are less severe than those mentioned. Nevertheless, our Sages said that a person who frequently commits them will not receive a portion in the world to come and [counseled] that these [sins] be avoided and care be taken in regard to them. They are:

- one who invents a [disparaging] nickname for a colleague; one who calls a colleague by a [disparaging] nickname;
- one who embarrasses a colleague in public;
- one who takes pride in his colleague's shame;
- one who disgraces Torah Sages;
- one who disgraces his teachers;
- one who degrades the festivals; and
- one who profanes sacred things.

When does the statement that these individuals do not have a portion in the world to come

apply? When they die without having repented. However, if such a person repents from his wicked deeds and dies as a Baal-Teshuvah, he will merit the world to come, for nothing can stand in the way of Teshuvah.

Even if he denies God's existence throughout his life and repents in his final moments, he merits a portion in the world to come as implied by [Isaiah 57:19] "Peace, peace, to the distant and the near," declares God. "I will heal him."

Any wicked person, apostate, or the like, who repents, whether in an open, revealed manner or in private, will be accepted as implied by [Jeremiah 3:22] "Return, faithless children." [We may infer] that even if one is still faithless, as obvious from the fact that he repents in private and not in public, his Teshuvah will be accepted.



TRANSCRIPTION OF SHIUR BY RAV MATIS WEINBERG SHLITA – CHAPTER THREE

What we've seen so far

The first chapter taught us that there is an objective reality which our sins affect. Where our repentance is motivated by a desire to feel better, purer, cleaned, (and not simply to address the wrong we have caused) we are merely substituting one false outlook for another. The fact that the new system may be more similar to the Torah than the old one does not necessarily make it authentic (is an atheist who becomes a Christian nearer to being a Jew?)

In the same way the first mitzvah after the giving of the Torah (Rashi on Shemot 26,1) is the command not to use gentile courts, even when we know that they will rule exactly the same way that a Beth Din would. A system may have things in common with another system (as in the joke that Chabad is the closest religion to Judaism!) but it remains a separate system. Repentance can only mean identification with reality, never the substitution of one analogous belief system for another.

The second chapter taught us that the events in one's life can be transformative when utilised in the repentance process. The most fundamental aspect of repentance is *aziva*, letting go. This is illustrated perfectly by the story in Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance about the monkey who traps itself by simply refusing to let go of the nut it is holding in the box. Intellectually we may know that there are consequences to our errant ways, but 'that's who I am' – we are unable to focus on the reality of who we should be. When we truly *let go* we rewire our brains, going back and addressing the neural pathways that we once created.

A mad man who comes over to you and tells you 'hey – I'm King David!' you want to get away from such a crazy person as quickly as possible. However one who says 'I have this terrible problem – I think I'm King David! Do you have the number of a psychiatrist?!' That's a person we feel we want to help, because they recognise their distance from reality. When we come to God with our own versions of repentance, God says back to us "hey! It's not bad enough that you sinned, now you want me to make you feel better about it!!" The only response to sin can be reflection and commitment to reengagement with reality. So too we say to Hashem 'we know we are distant and living lives in a way we shouldn't – please help us to want to change!' The Viduy on Yom Kippur says 'may it be your will that I do your will' which is embarrassing in how distant it shows that we are, but nevertheless it is a crucial beginning.

Third Chapter

This chapter begins with the introduction of the concepts of merits and transgressions, and the idea that we are judged. It is amazing that the Rambam believes that we didn't need to know this up to this point. The implication is that when we learned that we should address the wrong that we have brought into the world, we do so because we realise that we need to fix the world, not because we know that we are going to be judged for our actions. (Children naturally and impulsively want to be firemen, policemen etc because our drive to fix and help the world is inbuilt in our psyche; perhaps more even than that of self-preservation.)

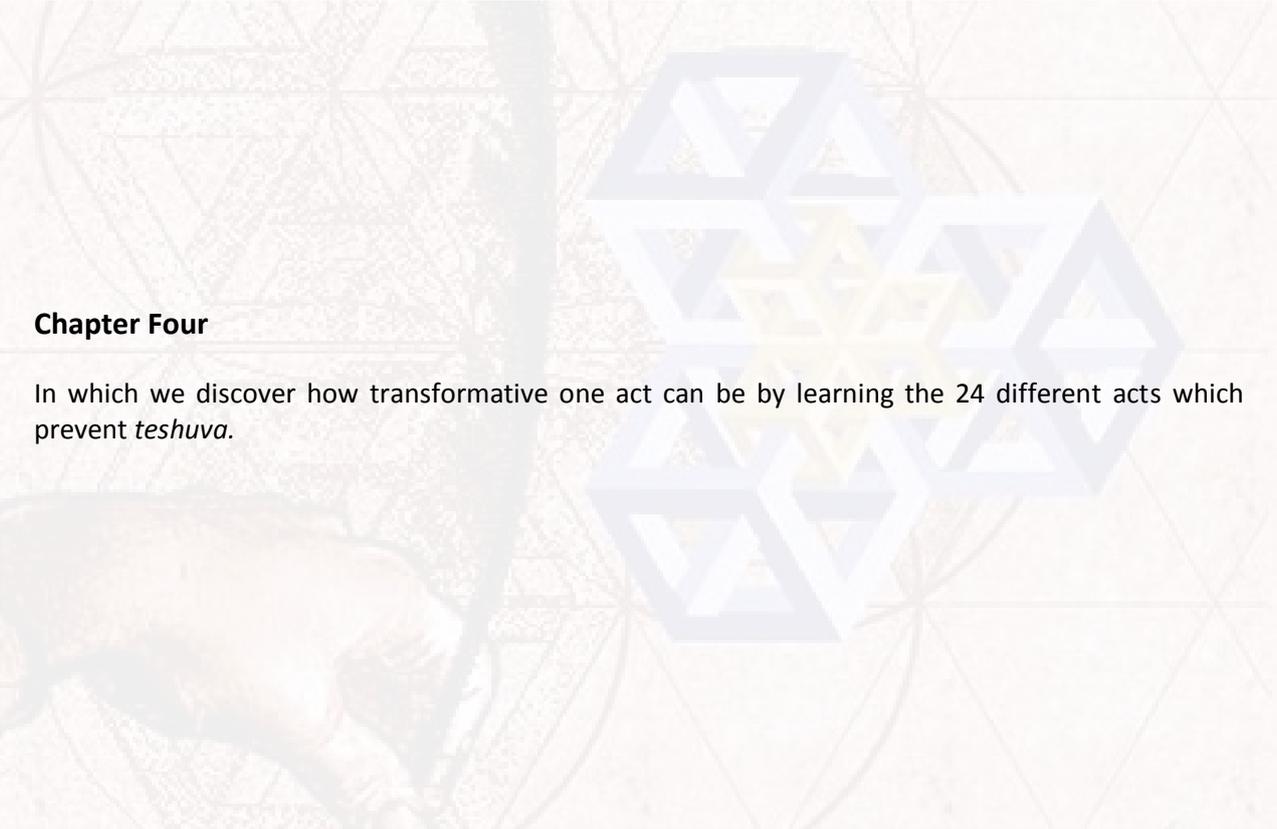
It is the nature of '*din*' (judgement) to create an ongoing interrelationship between the unfolding of life in terms of our acts in our life with our existential identity. Therefore the key word which occurs again and again in this chapter is '*Rov*' – 'majority'. There is a holistic balance which comes to define our existential state. There are three fundamental states;

'Tzadik', 'Rasha' and 'Benoni.' Note that the state of 'Benoni' is a state, not an undefined holding classification. We spoke about one's emotional drive to repentance in chapter 2, and now in chapter 3 we come to address our own relationship to our own existence. That's why we address Rosh HaShanah here. Why don't insurance companies analyse our actions instead of whether we smoke or drink to assess our policies??!! If we therefore answer that the judgement is purely in terms of the World to Come, then what's the point of a judgement every Rosh HaShanah?! Why not just be judged once at the end of our lives? The Rambam answers here that the concept of being judged means that it is a process of incorporating all of our actions into existence. The more aware we become, the more broad our perspective, the more aware we become of time existing before and after our lives and this moment. This implies that process is related to existence, that our lives are not merely a list of our actions

To repent because 'I feel so bad I did that' misses the point. Teshuva is the process of addressing the context of our lives which gave rise to us performing such an act. Just as it's crazy for a person to commit suicide because he lost all his money when he could simply go to Tahiti and live it up on the beach for the rest of his life, so too in a religious sense we shouldn't focus on a particular action, rather the context and drives for our *teshuva* are identification with reality itself. When we say in our heads "OK – what should I do now" "let me think about this" "great – what do I do now" we are connecting our current decision to our deeper and subconscious ideals and values. This is blowing the shofar, connecting the way in which we live our lives to reality.

The amazing definition of a *tzadik* (righteous) is one who has obtained awareness of the whole world. The idea of *tzadik yesod olam* is brought in the context of Shofar. It clearly doesn't mean that a slob who picks up a banana peel sustains the world, rather the natural state for anyone to exist within is a *benoni*. Al Capone said when being chased by the cops "I don't understand why they are doing this – there never lived a nicer guy." He was a person who would execute a person without a second thought, and then help an old lady across the world. Life has a propensity to keep us as *benonim* because it is incredibly hard to radically depart from the general catalogue of choices that we consider available to us. Rosh HaShana tells us to ask 'what am I?' This gives us a chance to start over, to find ourselves and to connect to the world which is why we are considered as a new being.

The Rambam introduces here that *teshuva* is the platform for the World to Come. The definition of Rosh HaShanah is a definition of whether we are or are not a *Ben Olam HaBah*. The meaning of the World to Come doesn't mean that it is in the future, (even though that's what it literally means) rather it teaches us the interrelationship of detail to the whole. The more *teshuva* is driven by guilt the less meaningful it is. We all seek to improve our lives, and animals are hardwired to do this through evolution, but this is not *teshuva*. *Teshuva* is reassessing the entirety of our lives in the context of letting go of a particular habit, very much like the guy who learns to live in Tahiti rather than be shipped off to a zoo like the monkey who couldn't let go of the nut.



Chapter Four

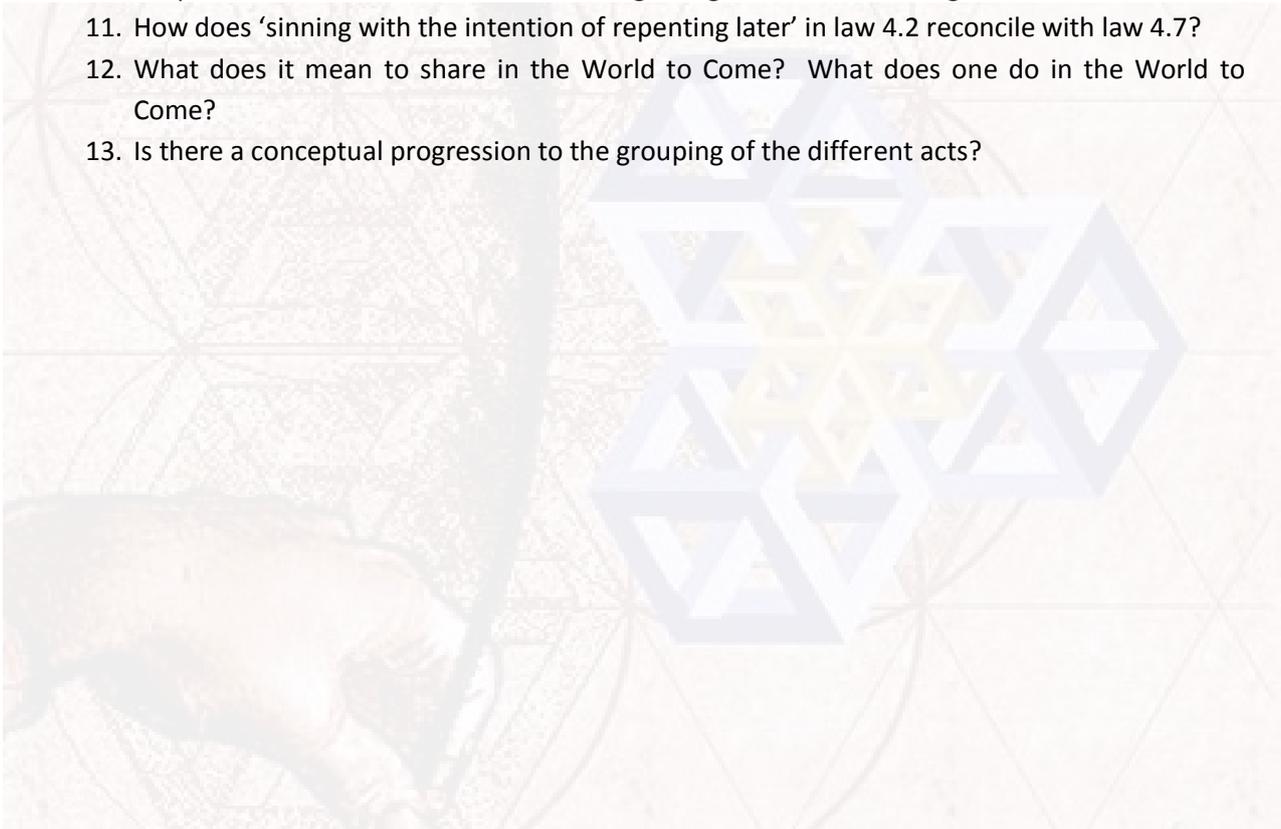
In which we discover how transformative one act can be by learning the 24 different acts which prevent *teshuva*.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

- 4.1. There are 24 acts which hold back repentance, and one who does them has performed something so majorly wrong Hashem will not grant that person the opportunity to repent.
- 4.2. Four of the sins are so serious that God will not accept one's repentance:
 1. Causing many people to sin or preventing them from doing a Mitzva
 2. Enticing a person from good to bad
 3. Not preventing one's child or friend from entering bad company
 4. Sinning with the intention of repenting later
- 4.3. Five of the sins lock the gates of repentance for a person:
 5. Removing oneself from the community (as one loses the merit of their communal repentance)
 6. Arguing with the words of the Sages
 7. Mocking the Mitzvot
 8. Disgracing one's Rabbi
 9. Disliking rebuke
- 4.4. There are five sins for which complete repentance cannot be done because one is unable to ascertain against who the sin was perpetrated:
 10. Cursing a group of people
 11. Teaming up with a thief (when one doesn't know from who the thief stole)
 12. Finding a lost article and not searching for its owner
 13. Using charity set aside for the poor/orphans/widows
 14. Accepting a bribe in order to influence a judge
- 4.5. There are five sins for which one is unlikely to repent:
 15. Eating a meal where ones host will have no food for his next meal (this is akin to theft)
 16. Using the guarantee of a loan given to a poor person
 17. Looking at a close relative who is immodestly dressed
 18. Enjoying the degradation of another person
 19. Suspecting the righteous of sinning
- 4.6. There are five sins which are attractive to commit and difficult to stop:
 20. Slander
 21. Tale bearing
 22. Having a quick temper
 23. Having bad thoughts
 24. Befriending a wicked person
- 4.7. None of the above completely prevent repentance, even though they inhibit it. If someone repented for having committed one of these sins his repentance if accepted, and he will have a share in the World to Come.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER – CHAPTER FOUR

1. Does one repent for a particular act, or does repentance relate to one's whole life?
2. How can a particular act affect one's ability to perform teshuva?
3. What would happen if one performed one of these acts and then did do teshuva?
4. In the scenario of 'not preventing one's child from entering bad company' has an act been performed?
5. What age do you think this is referring to?
6. The commentaries extend the scope of this law to all friends and family under our influence. Do you agree?
7. Read the list in 4.3. What is the common theme?
8. Why do you think the term 'lock the gates' is used?!
9. Read Pirkei Avot (4,3) – can the entirety of a life be fully expressed in one moment?
10. Why are these 24 sins described at the beginning and end as 'holding back' *teshuva*?
11. How does 'sinning with the intention of repenting later' in law 4.2 reconcile with law 4.7?
12. What does it mean to share in the World to Come? What does one do in the World to Come?
13. Is there a conceptual progression to the grouping of the different acts?



FULL TEXT – CHAPTER FOUR

- 4.1 There are 24 deeds which hold back Teshuvah: Four are the commission of severe sins. God will not grant the person who commits such deeds to repent because of the gravity of his transgressions.

They are:

- a. One who causes the masses to sin, included in this category is one who holds back the many from performing a positive command;
- b. One who leads his colleague astray from the path of good to that of bad; for example, one who proselytizes or serves as a missionary [for idol worship];
- c. One who sees his son becoming associated with evil influences and refrains from rebuking him. Since his son is under his authority, were he to rebuke him, he would have separated himself [from these influences]. Hence, [by refraining from admonishing him, it is considered] as if he caused him to sin.

Included in this sin are also all those who have the potential to rebuke others, whether an individual or a group, and refrain from doing so, leaving them to their shortcomings.

- d. One who says: "I will sin and then, repent." Included in this category is one who says: "I will sin and Yom Kippur will atone [for me]."

- 4.2 Among [the 24] are five deeds which cause the paths of Teshuvah to be locked before those who commit them. They are:

- a. One who separates himself from the community; when they repent, he will not be together with them and he will not merit to share in their merit.
- b. One who contradicts the words of the Sages; the controversy he provokes will cause him to cut himself off from them and, thus, he will never know the ways of repentance.
- c. One who scoffs at the mitzvot; since he considers them as degrading, he will not pursue them or fulfill them. If he does not fulfill mitzvot, how can he merit [to repent]?
- d. One who demeans his teachers; this will cause them to reject and dismiss him as [Elishah did to] Gehazi. In this period of rejection, he will not find a teacher or guide to show him the path of truth.
- e. One who hates admonishment; this will not leave him a path for repentance. Admonishment leads to Teshuvah. When a person is informed about his sins and shamed because of them, he will repent. Accordingly, [rebukes are] included in the Torah, [for example]: "Remember, do not forget, that you provoked [God, your Lord, in the desert. From the day you left Egypt until here,] you have been rebelling..." (Deuteronomy 9:7).

"[Until this day,] God did not give you a heart to know..." (Deuteronomy 29:3).

"[Is this the way you repay God,] you ungrateful, unwise nation" (Deuteronomy 2:6).

Similarly, Isaiah rebuked Israel, declaring: "Woe, sinful nation, [people laden with iniquity...]" (Isaiah 1:4),

"The ox knows its owner, [and the ass, his master's crib. Israel does not know...]" (ibid.: 1:3),

I know you are obstinate... (ibid. 48:4).

God also commanded him to admonish the transgressors as [ibid. 58:1] states: "Call out from your throat, do not spare it." Similarly, all the prophets rebuked Israel until she repented. Therefore, it is proper for each and every congregation in Israel to appoint a great sage of venerable age, with [a reputation of] fear of heaven from his youth, beloved by the community, to admonish the masses and motivate them to Teshuvah.

This person who hates admonishment will not come to the preacher's [lecture] or hear his

words. Accordingly, he will continue his sinful [paths], which he regards as good.

4.3 Among these [24] are five [transgressions] for which it is impossible for the person who commits them to repent completely. They are sins between man and man, concerning which it is impossible to know the person whom one sinned against in order to return [what is owed him] or ask for his forgiveness. They are:

- a. One who curses the many without cursing a specific individual from whom he can request forgiveness;
- b. One who takes a share of a thief's [gain], for he does not know to whom the stolen article belongs. The thief steals from many, brings him [his share], and he takes it. Furthermore, he reinforces the thief and causes him to sin;
- c. One who finds a lost object and does not announce it [immediately] in order to return it to its owners. Afterwards, when he desires to repent, he will not know to whom to return the article;
- d. One who eats an ox belonging to the poor, orphans, or widows. These are unfortunate people, who are not well-known or recognized by the public. They wander from city to city and thus, there is no one who can identify them and know to whom the ox belonged in order that it may be returned to him.
- e. One who takes a bribe to pervert judgment. He does not know the extent of the perversion or the power [of its implications] in order to pay the [people whom he wronged], for his judgment had a basis. Furthermore, [by taking a bribe], he reinforces the person [who gave it] and causes him to sin.

4.4 Also among the [24] are five [transgressions] for which it is unlikely that the person who commits them will repent. Most people regard these matters lightly. Hence, [by committing such a transgression,] a person will sin without realizing that he has. They are:

- a. One who eats from a meal which is not sufficient for its owners. This is a "shade of theft." However, the person who [partook from this meal] will not realize that he has sinned, for he will rationalize: "I only ate with his permission."
- b. One who makes use of a pledge taken from a poor person. The pledge taken from a poor person would be his axe or plow. He rationalizes: "Their value will not depreciate and, hence, I haven't stolen anything from him."
- c. One who looks at women forbidden to him. He considers the matter of little consequence, rationalizing: "Did I engage in relations with her? Was I intimate with her?" He fails to realize how looking [at such sights] is a great sin, for it motivates a person to actually take part in illicit sexual relations as implied by [Numbers 15:39] "Do not follow after your heart and your eyes."
- d. One who takes pride in his colleague's shame. He tells himself that he has not sinned, for his colleague was not present. Thus, no shame came [directly] to his colleague, nor did he humiliate him. He merely contrasted his good deeds and wisdom against the deeds or wisdom of his colleague in order that, out of that comparison, he would appear honorable, and his colleague, shameful.
- e. One who suspects worthy people. He will also say to himself "I haven't sinned," for he will rationalize: "What have I done to him? All I did was raise a doubt whether he committed the wrong or not." He does not realize that this is a sin, for he has considered a worthy person as a transgressor.

4.5 Among the [24] are five [qualities] which have the tendency to lead the transgressor to continue to commit them and which are very difficult to abandon. Therefore, a person should be very careful lest he become attached to them, for they are very bad attributes. They are:

- a. gossip;

- b. slander;
- c. quick-temperedness;
- d. a person preoccupied with sinister thoughts;
- e. a person who becomes friendly with a wicked person, for he learns from his deeds and they are imprinted on his heart. This was implied by Solomon [Proverbs 13:20]: "A companion of fools will suffer harm."

In Hilchot De'ot, we explained the [character traits] which all people should continually follow. This surely holds true for a Baal-Teshuvah.

- 4.6 All of the above, and other similar transgressions, though they hold back repentance, they do not prevent it entirely. Should one of these people repent, he is a Baal-Teshuvah and has a portion in the world to come.

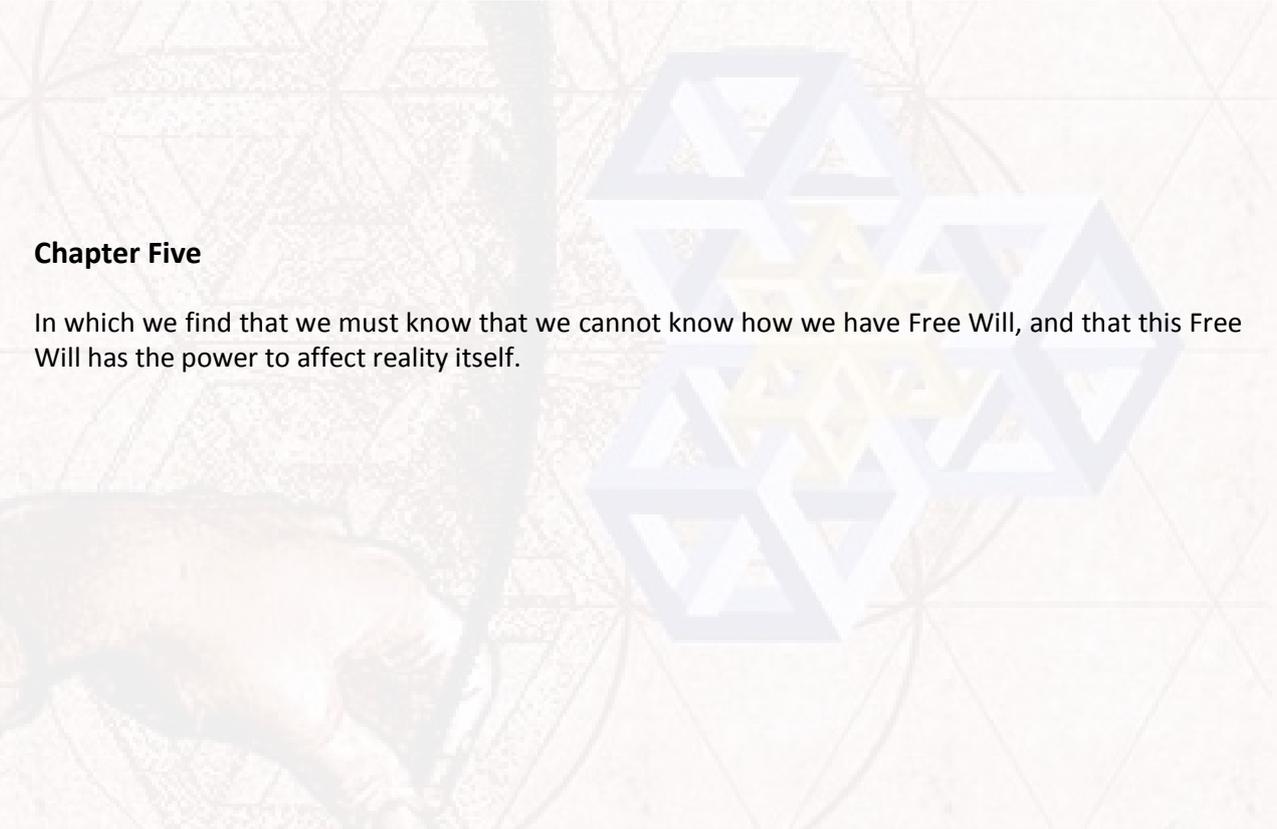


TRANSCRIPTION OF SHIUR BY RAV MATIS WEINBERG SHLITA – CHAPTER FOUR

The third chapter taught us that nature of consciousness is fundamentally linked to *din* (judgement) and that *din* is always coming to define the holistic connection of elements to a holistic single reality, a reality which can be the entirety of his life up to this point on Rosh HaShana, or the single reality of his life in terms of the universe or the entirety of his life at his own death. It provides the platform that enables the place of *teshuva* which is the place a person has in *Olam HaBah*, and the Rambam needs to define who does not have such a place. He can't talk about *teshuva* as being driven by *din* and offering a platform for consciousness unless he sets out the type of individual who cannot have that type of platform. He therefore describes what constitutes a positive and active destruction of the level of consciousness which allows for that level of *teshuva*.

The Rambam therefore goes through each of the acts which deprive one of the ability to do *teshuva*. Such a person loses their place in *Olam HaBah*, and becomes no longer able to see themselves from the outside. We therefore introduced a new term at the end of the third chapter which is no longer *asiya teshuva* – doing repentance, but now *chozer b'teshuva* – returning in repentance. The fourth chapter essentially describes various states of being which prevent *teshuva* because the nature of what has been done prevents *teshuva* from being performed. The important concept to understand is that there is such a thing as an act itself which can define ones entire relationship with Hashem.

The fourth chapter is somewhat unique in that it is essentially a list, and one needs to learn through this list one by one in order to understand the importance of each item.



Chapter Five

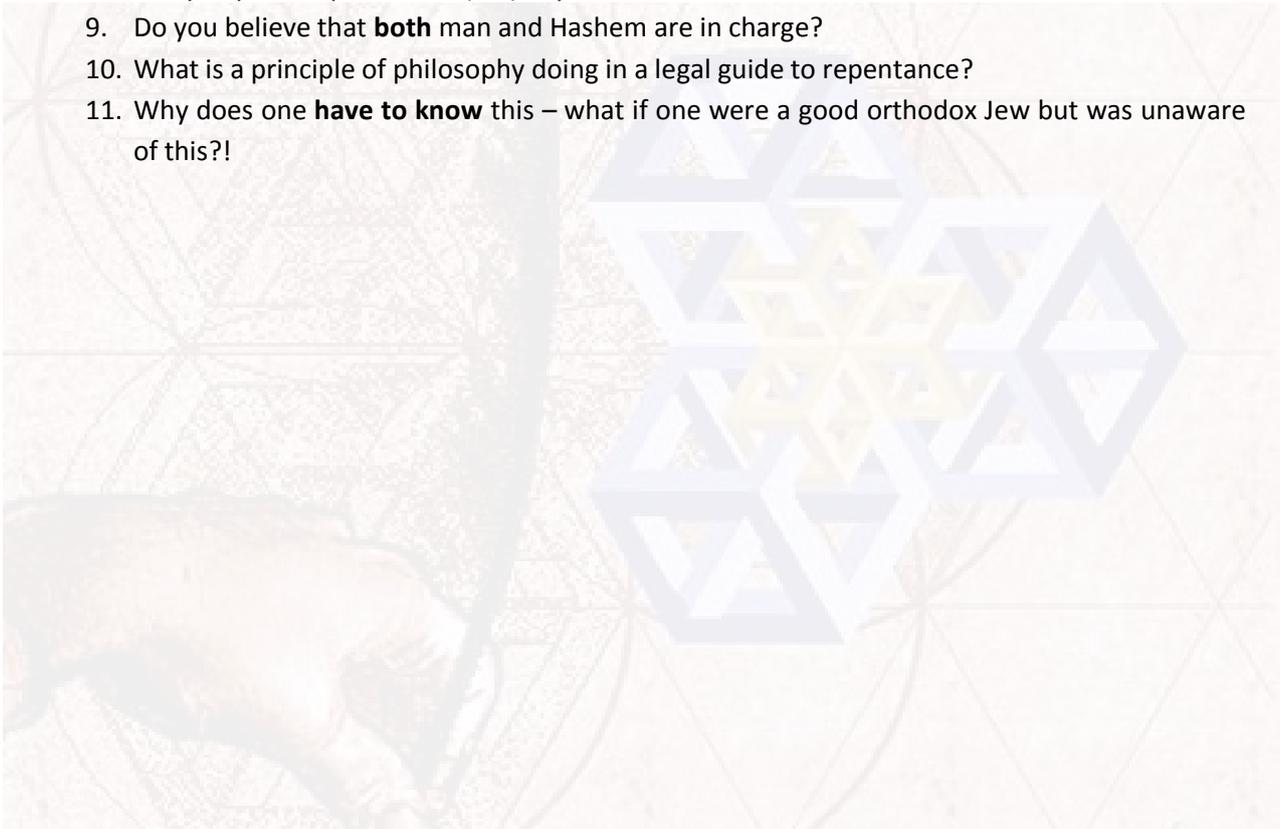
In which we find that we must know that we cannot know how we have Free Will, and that this Free Will has the power to affect reality itself.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

- 5.1. One has free will to follow either the good ways and be righteous or the bad ways and be wicked. One should decide one's opinions for oneself, be they good or bad. We are completely free and there is nothing in the world that can stop us doing something we want, as G-d says: let Me banish man from the Garden of Eden "lest he stretch out his hand" and become immortal.
- 5.2. Do not even consider the stupidity of the day and most of the idiots of Israel who claim that Hashem decrees at birth whether one will be righteous or wicked. We are in full control of our behaviour, why else would the Torah command us to obey the commandment and reward us for doing so?
- 5.3. The fact that Free Will exists is very important, and the entire concept of reward and punishment is dependent on it. Hashem does not force any decree upon a person, He always lets them choose the path they will follow.
- 5.4. If Hashem would decree or guide a person to be good or wicked (as the stupid astrologers think) then why would there be prophets who help us to improve our ways ?! Just as it is Hashem's will that fire and wind should rise and water and earth should sink, and that all creations will perform His will, so too it is Hashem's will that men should have Free Will, and will do what they do because of their own free choice.
- 5.5. Hashem knows everything that has happened and that will happen, including whether a person will be wicked or righteous. If He knows a man will be righteous, it is impossible for that person not to be righteous (because if it were possible for that person to be righteous Hashem would not have full knowledge of all that will happen.) One has to know that this is a complex paradox. One first must acknowledge that we cannot understand Hashem's ways. We must accept that we have free will, and that we do not have the capacity to understand how Hashem can have full knowledge of all future events.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER – CHAPTER FIVE

1. Can we **know** we have Free Will or is this something we simply must **believe**?
2. Read (5,1.) Why the strange language of ‘stretch out his hand?’ Why not say ‘and place in mouth, and close jaws, and swallow..’!!
3. How can stuffing your face with a fruit make you immortal?
4. Hashem is our Father in Heaven. What are the implications for parents everywhere that we are given such colossal power and responsibility?
5. Is every choice we make an exercise of our free will? Ordering from a menu? What is the difference between having a choice and having an option?
6. Why should it be Hashem’s will that human’s have their own Free Will?
7. Free Will is the crowning glory of man, the element that makes us in the image of G-d – why?
8. Can you put the paradox in (5,5) in your own words?
9. Do you believe that **both** man and Hashem are in charge?
10. What is a principle of philosophy doing in a legal guide to repentance?
11. Why does one **have to know** this – what if one were a good orthodox Jew but was unaware of this?!



FULL TEXT – CHAPTER FIVE

- 5.1 Free will is granted to all men. If one desires to turn himself to the path of good and be righteous, the choice is his. Should he desire to turn to the path of evil and be wicked, the choice is his.

This is [the intent of] the Torah's statement (Genesis 3:22): "Behold, man has become unique as ourselves, knowing good and evil," i.e., the human species became singular in the world with no other species resembling it in the following quality: that man can, on his own initiative, with his knowledge and thought, know good and evil, and do what he desires. There is no one who can prevent him from doing good or bad. Accordingly, [there was a need to drive him from the Garden of Eden,] "lest he stretch out his hand [and take from the tree of life]."

- 5.2 A person should not entertain the thesis held by the fools among the gentiles and the majority of the undeveloped among Israel that, at the time of a man's creation, The Holy One, blessed be He, decrees whether he will be righteous or wicked.

This is untrue. Each person is fit to be righteous like Moses, our teacher, or wicked, like Jeroboam. [Similarly,] he may be wise or foolish, merciful or cruel, miserly or generous, or [acquire] any other character traits. There is no one who compels him, sentences him, or leads him towards either of these two paths. Rather, he, on his own initiative and decision, tends to the path he chooses.

This was [implied by the prophet,] Jeremiah who stated [Eichah 3:381: "From the mouth of the Most High, neither evil or good come forth." Accordingly, it is the sinner, himself, who causes his own loss.

Therefore, it is proper for a person to cry and mourn for his sins and for what he has done to his soul, the evil consequences, he brought upon it. This is implied by the following verse [ibid.:39]: "Of what should a living man be aggrieved? [A man of his sins]."

[The prophet] continues explaining, since free choice is in our hands and our own decision [is what prompts us to] commit all these wrongs, it is proper for us to repent and abandon our wickedness, for this choice is presently in our hand. This is implied by the following verse [ibid.:40]: "Let us search and examine our ways and return [to God]."

- 5.3 This principle is a fundamental concept and a pillar [on which rests the totality] of the Torah and mitzvot as [Deuteronomy 30:15] states: "Behold, I have set before you today life [and good, death and evil]." Similarly, [Deuteronomy 11:26] states, "Behold, I have set before you today [the blessing and the curse]," implying that the choice is in your hands.

Any one of the deeds of men which a person desires to do, he may, whether good or evil. Therefore, [Deuteronomy 5:26] states:

"If only their hearts would always remain this way." From this, we can infer that the Creator does not compel or decree that people should do either good or bad. Rather, everything is left to their [own choice].

- 5.4 Were God to decree that an individual would be righteous or wicked or that there would be a quality which draws a person by his essential nature to any particular path [of behavior], way of thinking, attributes, or deeds, as imagined by many of the fools [who believe] in astrology - how could He command us through [the words of] the prophets: "Do this," "Do

not do this," "Improve your behavior," or "Do not follow after your wickedness?"

[According to their mistaken conception,] from the beginning of man's creation, it would be decreed upon him, or his nature would draw him, to a particular quality and he could not depart from it.

What place would there be for the entire Torah? According to which judgement or sense of justice would retribution be administered to the wicked or reward to the righteous? Shall the whole world's Judge not act justly!

A person should not wonder: How is it possible for one to do whatever he wants and be responsible for his own deeds? - Is it possible for anything to happen in this world without the permission and desire of its Creator as [Psalms 135:6] states: "Whatever God wishes, He has done in the heavens and in the earth?"

One must know that everything is done in accord with His will and, nevertheless, we are responsible for our deeds.

How is this [apparent contradiction] resolved? Just as the Creator desired that [the elements of] fire and wind rise upward and [those of] water and earth descend downward, that the heavenly spheres revolve in a circular orbit, and all the other creations of the world follow the nature which He desired for them, so too, He desired that man have free choice and be responsible for his deeds, without being pulled or forced. Rather, he, on his own initiative, with the knowledge which God has granted him, will do anything that man is able to do.

Therefore, he is judged according to his deeds. If he does good, he is treated with beneficence. If he does bad, he is treated harshly. This is implied by the prophets' statements: "This has been the doing of your hands" [Malachi 1:9]; "They also have chosen their own paths" [Isaiah 66:3].

This concept was also implied by Solomon in his statement [Ecclesiastes 11:9]: "Young man, rejoice in your youth... but, know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment," i.e., know that you have the potential to do, but in the future, you will have to account for your deeds.

5.5 One might ask: Since The Holy One, blessed be He, knows everything that will occur before it comes to pass, does He or does He not know whether a person will be righteous or wicked?

If He knows that he will be righteous, [it appears] impossible for him not to be righteous. However, if one would say that despite His knowledge that he would be righteous, it is possible for him to be wicked, then His knowledge would be incomplete.

Know that the resolution to this question [can be described as]: "Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." Many great and fundamental principles and lofty concepts are dependent upon it. However, the statements that I will make must be known and understood [as a basis for the comprehension of this matter].

As explained in the second chapter of Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah, The Holy One, blessed be He, does not know with a knowledge that is external from Him as do men, whose knowledge and selves are two [different entities]. Rather, He, may His name be praised, and His knowledge are one.

Human knowledge cannot comprehend this concept in its entirety for just as it is beyond the

potential of man to comprehend and conceive the essential nature of the Creator, as [Exodus 33:20] states: "No man will perceive, Me and live," so, too, it is beyond man's potential to comprehend and conceive the Creator's knowledge. This was the intent of the prophet's [Isaiah 55:8] statements: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways, My ways."

Accordingly, we do not have the potential to conceive how The Holy One, blessed be He, knows all the creations and their deeds. However, this is known without any doubt: That man's actions are in his [own] hands and The Holy One, blessed be He, does not lead him [in a particular direction] or decree that he do anything.

This matter is known, not only as a tradition of faith, but also, through clear proofs from the words of wisdom. Consequently, the prophets taught that a person is judged for his deeds, according to his deeds - whether good or bad. This is a fundamental principle on which is dependent all the words of prophecy.



TRANSCRIPTION OF SHIUR BY RAV MATIS WEINBERG SHLITA – CHAPTER FIVE

We have had three different versions of *teshuva*:

1. A vision of *teshuva* that is beyond (or before) all of a person's drives. It is simply taking responsibility for reality and does not involve any of his emotive or personal drives. At this level both the damage that has been done, and the required response need to be defined in realistic terms.
2. After describing the transition between this first level, we are introduced to a second level where a person becomes important by describing *teshuva gemura* (perfect repentance.) As the second chapter is all about the way in which we feel, the darkness we find ourselves in and the way in which we search for G-d, the Rambam describes here *teshuva bezaka* (repentance by crying out to Hashem.) The way in which you feel and the desire for forgiveness and being accepted by Hashem is what counts. It becomes a communication, rather than the pure articulation in chapter one. The difference between chapter one and chapter two is like the person who asks for help with his insanity! This is not an effective *teshuva* as doesn't address the reality, but it is useful (as it gains you forgiveness.) At least this admits that we should have *azivas hachet*, letting go of the sin. If one contrasts the *viduy* (confession) of chapters one and two one sees that whilst the *viduy* of chapter one was apologetic and stated that one would not repeat the act, the *viduy* of chapter two is simply a declaration that we are insane, unable to carry out the habits and actions that we know would be good for us, and contains no promise that we will not repeat the act.
3. Rosh HaShana is only reachable by understanding *tzdik yesod olam*, appreciating how an individual effects reality itself. The strange idea of consciousness is that it is the interrelationship of our simultaneous awareness of both the breadth of all of existence and also the present. The only thing that drives a person to *teshuva* is awareness. As soon as one becomes aware of his *awareness* one takes responsibility for existence and almost impulsively one does *teshuva*.

The fourth chapter described the elements that hold back *teshuva*.

The fifth chapter's central theme is the nature of the creativity that is involved in human will, the ability for human beings to build a world for themselves. Despite the fact that we said in the first chapter that there is an external realness to things we say here that my actions are connected to reality and my awareness of reality drives my *teshuva*.

The point of this chapter is that fantasy effects reality. G-d banished man from Gan Eden "lest he stretch forth his hand and eat from the fruit" and live for ever. We therefore see that man is given the ability to effect reality mechanically. The words in the verse seem clumsy to describe man "stretching forth his hand" – why not add "plucking the apple, placing in his mouth, biting, chewing, swallowing etc etc! The point the verse is making is that even a mechanical act like picking fruit has the ability to affect reality.

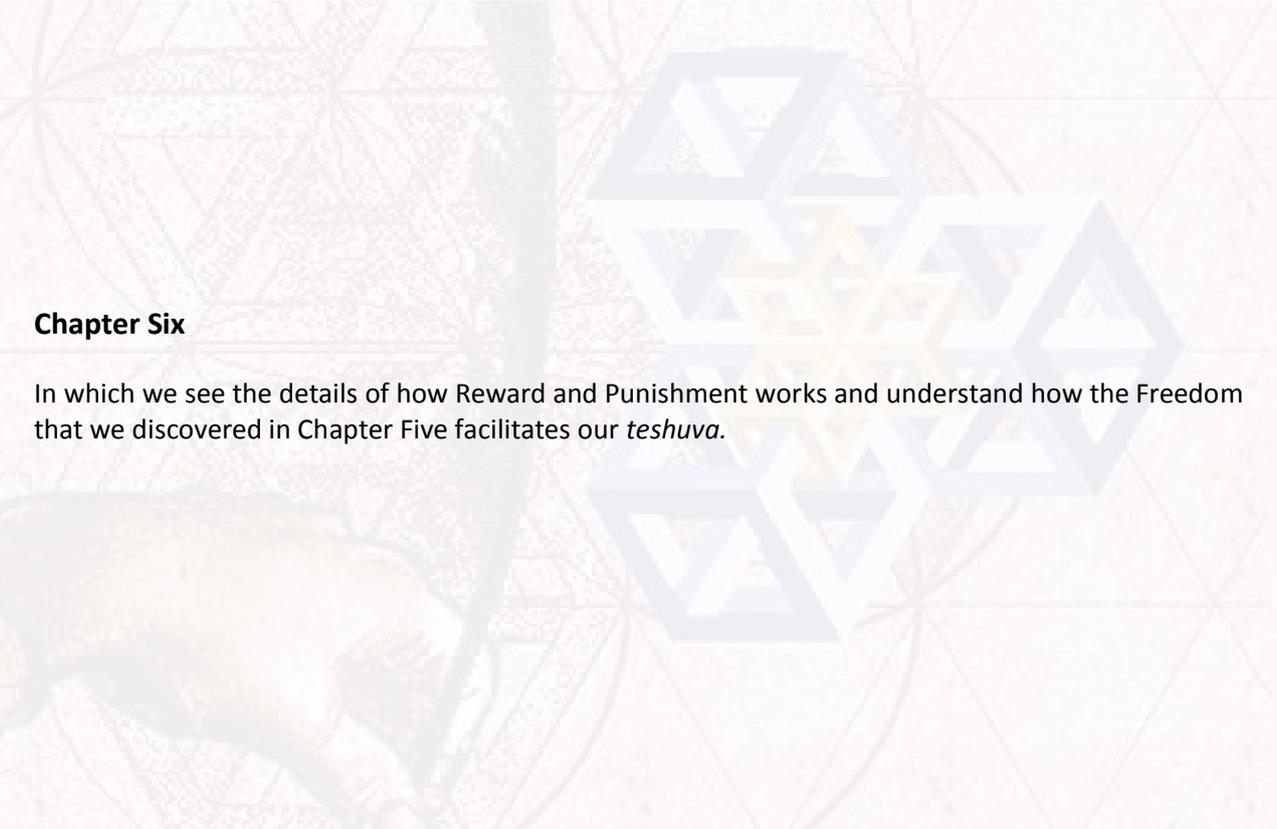
The nature of reality within which we live is a reality in which G-d's presence is expressed only by a human doing what he wants. The nature of the human condition is licence, not will. Humans have been given licence to change the world, and we have the ability to change mechanically what would appear to have been a given state of the universe. Since that licence exists, and it is completely up to us what time of world we live in and what type of life we lead, we redefine the nature of being with *teshuva*. The most fundamental law of reality is that human consciousness defines reality. This means that our level of responsibility is infinitely greater than we thought. The ultimate desire of Hashem is that there should be a human race acting autonomously and making free decisions. We would think that one who murders must be acting against the will of Hashem as murder is prohibited in the Torah, but it is not so because the greater will of Hashem

is that humans act on the basis of their own free will. The most fundamental law of nature is therefore that human perception defines reality.

It of course seems strange to think that stuffing fruit into your mouth can change the nature of reality, and yet this is exactly what we are told the effect of Adam's sin was. What we learn from the episode of Adam's sin is that The Torah is based on a profound interrelationship between Hashem and man which can be affected by mechanical acts. There is no state of the universe because man defines and is constantly redefining the state of the universe. The Rambam introduces his discussion of Free Will with the words '*you must know this*' – it is this information that you need in order to live in this world and be responsible for our lives and indeed for reality.

We know that it will almost certainly not be one particular cigarette that causes the imbalance that caused the cellular defect that caused lung cancer, and yet each and every cigarette matters because we never know which one could be the one. This is similar to when Moshe says 'after I die you will sin..' Moshe doesn't know the future but was speaking statistically. However there are two levels of reality; one is a mechanical statistical reality of Free Will and the other is the holistic vision of G-d's Knowledge which is statistically incorporative of all of these issues. These two levels both exist, but we cannot conceive of the interface between them. The Rambam says that 'you have to know' this, even though he knows that we cannot know it, and essentially asks us to trust him, because the knowledge of how the interface works is not what is important, what is important is to know that such an interface exists. For one who does know this one cannot do *teshuva*, because one will be constantly trying to create an artificial interface between oneself and an artificial reality. *Teshuva* is fundamentally related to the Creation of the Universe, and that is the whole point of this world; we say that the nature of an existence which is *teshuva* orientated can only be where there is a relationship between that which it is that one does, and the way in which the universe works out.

When we now look back at the first Chapter we realise quite how meaningful our position within reality actually is. It is not simply a question of actions, it is a question of being. Therefore the responsibility is all the greater, because without this knowledge not only can one not do *teshuva*, one cannot even fulfil mitzvot as Hashem is reduced to a cosmic circus keeper asking us to jump through the hoops of fulfilling the mitzvot. Do we seriously consider that the entirety of Creation is simply that the Creator is a Cosmic seal trainer, and the more times we bark the more fish we are given?! The underlying conceptual basis for *teshuva* is set out in this chapter, it is a description of the state of the universe and shows how an individual is part of the universe, and sets out the relationship between the two.



Chapter Six

In which we see the details of how Reward and Punishment works and understand how the Freedom that we discovered in Chapter Five facilitates our *teshuva*.

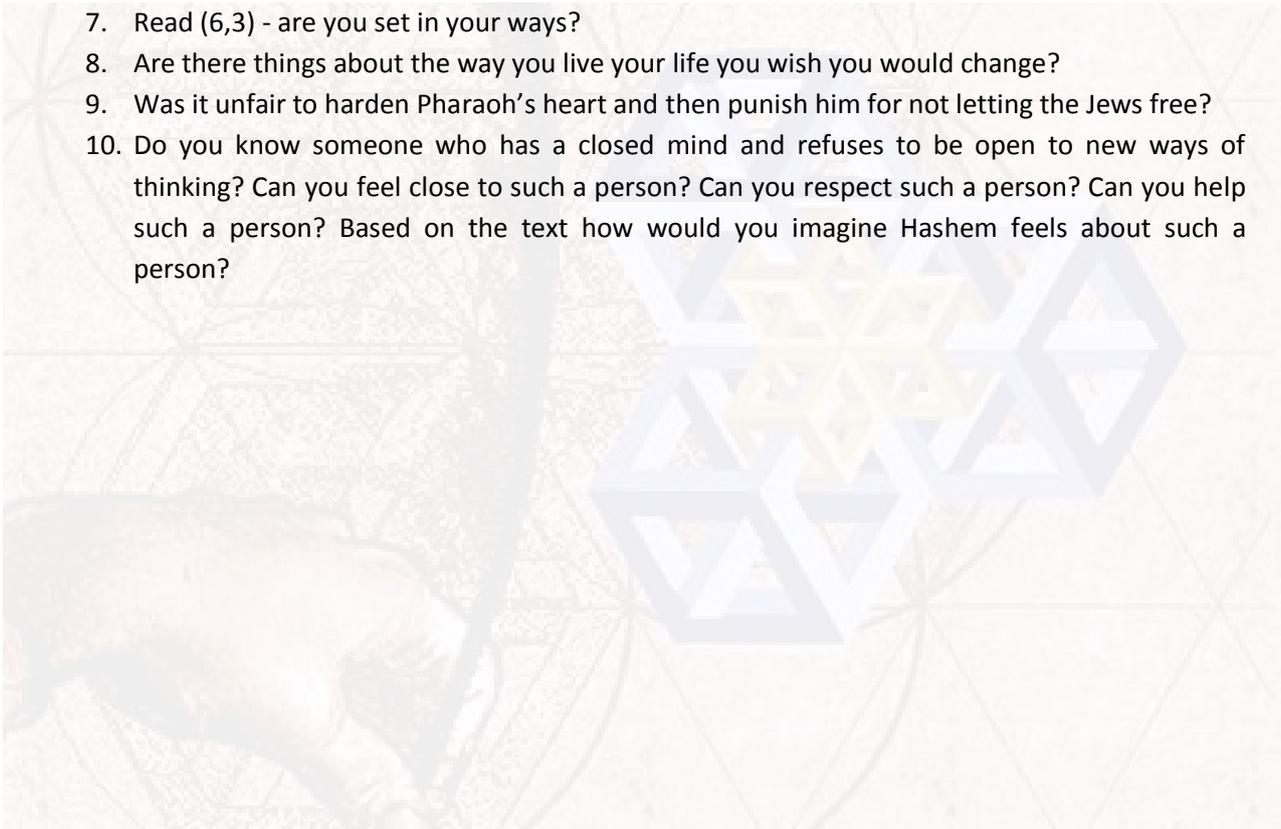
SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

The theme of chapter six is how to interpret the verses in the Torah which address Reward and Punishment, and how one's existence is governed by one's actions.

- 6.1. Only G-d knows how to hold a person accountable for their mistakes. For some mistakes they may suffer in this world, experiencing illness, financial loss or through their children. For other mistakes they may suffer in the World to Come. Some mistakes may require suffering in both worlds.
- 6.2. The above applies to one who does not repent. If one does repent their repentance shields them from suffering.
- 6.3. One is only held accountable for mistakes made when one acted with freedom and awareness. One is held accountable for one's initial decisions, but once one becomes routinely and habitually used to acting in an improper way, one is not held accountable for each and every act. A person who becomes so set in their ways that they are unlikely in incapable of changing may have the opportunity to repent taken away from them, as it says "and Hashem hardened Pharaoh's heart."
- 6.4. Because of 6.3 above one major theme in prayer is that Hashem should open our hearts and our minds to see ourselves clearly, and to be aware of the difference between how we **are** living our lives, and how we **should be** living our lives.
- 6.5. One of the functions of a prophet was to instruct people how to improve or refine their lives. Do not think that the Torah diminished Free Will when it predicted about the Egyptians that "they will afflict you", about the Israelites that they will "go astray after the gods of the strangers in the land" and also that "the poor will never cease out of the land." These statements refer to a proportion of the national population, each individual is absolutely free to do as they see fit.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER – CHAPTER SIX

1. Do you wish G-d did not hold us accountable for the decisions we make?
2. Why are we accountable?
3. Is it possible for us to know whether a particular event in our life is a reward/punishment for a particular act?
4. This chapter introduces the idea that there is payback for the mistakes we make. Assuming that this book is a conceptual progression, what is surprising about being taught this idea for the first time in the sixth chapter?
5. Do you agree that the term 'shields them from suffering' implies that the suffering still exists, but it just doesn't reach its target? If so why should this be?
6. Victor Hugo wrote in Les Miserables that 'I wished that G-d would be forgiving.' What do you think about the concept that suffering may be sent our way when we make mistakes?
7. Read (6,3) - are you set in your ways?
8. Are there things about the way you live your life you wish you would change?
9. Was it unfair to harden Pharaoh's heart and then punish him for not letting the Jews free?
10. Do you know someone who has a closed mind and refuses to be open to new ways of thinking? Can you feel close to such a person? Can you respect such a person? Can you help such a person? Based on the text how would you imagine Hashem feels about such a person?



FULL TEXT – CHAPTER SIX

- 6.1 There are many verses in the Torah and the words of the prophets which appear to contradict this fundamental principle. [Thus,] the majorities of the people err because of them and think that the Holy One, blessed be He, does decree that a person commit evil or good and that a person's heart is not given over to him to direct it towards any path he desires.

Behold, I will explain a great and fundamental principle [of faith] on the basis of which the interpretation of those verses can be understood. [As a preface,] when an individual or the people of a country sin, the sinner consciously and willfully committing that sin, it is proper to exact retribution from him as explained. The Holy One, blessed be He, knows how to exact punishment: There are certain sins for which justice determines that retribution be exacted in this world; on the sinner's person, on his possessions, or on his small children.

[Retribution is exacted upon a person's] small children who do not possess intellectual maturity and have not reached the age where they are obligated to perform mitzvot [because these children] are considered as his property. [This concept is alluded to] by the verse [Deuteronomy 24:16]: "A man will die because of his own sins." [We may infer: This rule only applies] after one has become "a man."

There are other sins for which justice determines that retribution be exacted in the world to come with no damages coming to the transgressor in this world. There are [other] sins for which retribution is taken in this world and in the world to come.

- 6.2 When does the above apply? When [the transgressor] does not repent. However, if he repents, his Teshuvah is a shield against retribution. Just as a person may sin consciously and willfully, he may repent consciously and willfully.
- 6.3 A person may commit a great sin or many sins causing the judgment rendered before the True Judge to be that the retribution [administered to] this transgressor for these sins which he willfully and consciously committed is that his Teshuvah will be held back. He will not be allowed the chance to repent from his wickedness so that he will die and be wiped out because of the sin he committed.

This is implied by the Holy One, blessed be He's statement [related] by Isaiah [6:10]: "Make the heart of this people fat [and make their ears heavy. Smear over their eyes, lest they see with their eyes... understand with their hearts, repent and be healed]."

Similarly, [II Chronicles 36:16] states " They mocked the messengers of God, scorned His words, scoffed at His prophets until the anger of God mounted up against His people until there was no remedy."

Implied [by these verses] is that they willingly sinned, multiplying their iniquity until it was obliged to hold back their Teshuvah, [which is referred to as] the "remedy."

For these reasons, it is written in the Torah [Exodus 14:4], "I will harden Pharaoh's heart." Since, he began to sin on his own initiative and caused hardships to the Israelites who dwelled in his land as [Exodus 1:10] states: "Come, let us deal wisely with them," judgment obligated that he be prevented from repenting so that he would suffer retribution. Therefore, The Holy One, blessed be He, hardened his heart.

Why did [God] send Moses to [Pharaoh], telling him: "Send [forth the people], repent"? The Holy One, blessed be He, had already told that he would not release [the people], as [Exodus

9:30] states: "I realize that you and your subjects [still do not fear God]."

[The reason is stated in Exodus 9:16:] "For this alone, I have preserved you... so that My name will be spoken about throughout the earth," i.e., to make known to all the inhabitants of the world that when the Holy One, blessed be He, withholds repentance from a sinner, he cannot repent, but he will die in the wickedness that he initially committed willfully.

Similarly, Sichon was held liable for repentance to be withheld from him, because of the sins he committed, as [Deuteronomy 2:30] states: "God, your Lord, hardened his spirit and strengthened his heart."

Also, the Canaanites held back from repenting, because of their abominable acts, so that they would wage war against Israel as [Joshua 11:20] states: "This was inspired by God, to harden their hearts so that they should come against Israel in battle in order to utterly destroy them."

Similarly, the Israelites during the era of Elijah committed many iniquities. Repentance was held back from those who committed these many sins, as [I Kings 18:37] states: "You have turned their heart backwards," i.e., held repentance back from them.

In conclusion, the Almighty did not decree that Pharaoh should harm the Israelites that Sichon should sin in his land, that the Canaanites should perform abominable acts, or that the Israelites should worship idols. They all sinned on their own initiative and they were obligated to have Teshuvah held back from them.

6.4 This is what is implied in the requests of the righteous and the prophets in their prayers, [asking] God to help them on the path of truth, as David pleaded [Psalms 86:11]: "God, show me Your way that I may walk in Your truth;" i.e., do not let my sins prevent me from [reaching] the path of truth which will lead me to appreciate Your way and the oneness of Your name.

A similar intent [is conveyed] by the request [Psalms 51:14]: "Support me with a spirit of magnanimity;" i.e., let my spirit [be willing] to do Your will and do not cause my sins to prevent me from repenting. Rather, let the choice remain in my hand until I repent and comprehend and appreciate the path of truth. In a similar way, [one must interpret] all the [verses] which resemble these.

6.5 What was implied by David's statement [Psalms 25:8-9]: "God is good and upright, therefore, he instructs sinners in the path. He guides the humble [in the path of justice and] teaches the humble His way]"? That He sends them prophets to inform them of the path of God and to encourage them to repent.

Furthermore, it implies that He granted them the power to learn and to understand. This attribute is present in all men: As long as a person follows the ways of wisdom and righteousness, he will desire them and pursue them. This [may be inferred from] the statement of our Sages of blessed memory: "One who comes to purify [himself] is helped;" i.e., he finds himself assisted in this matter.

[A question may still arise, for] behold, it is written in the Torah [Genesis 15:13]: "They shall enslave them and oppress them," [seemingly implying that] He decreed that the Egyptians would commit evil.

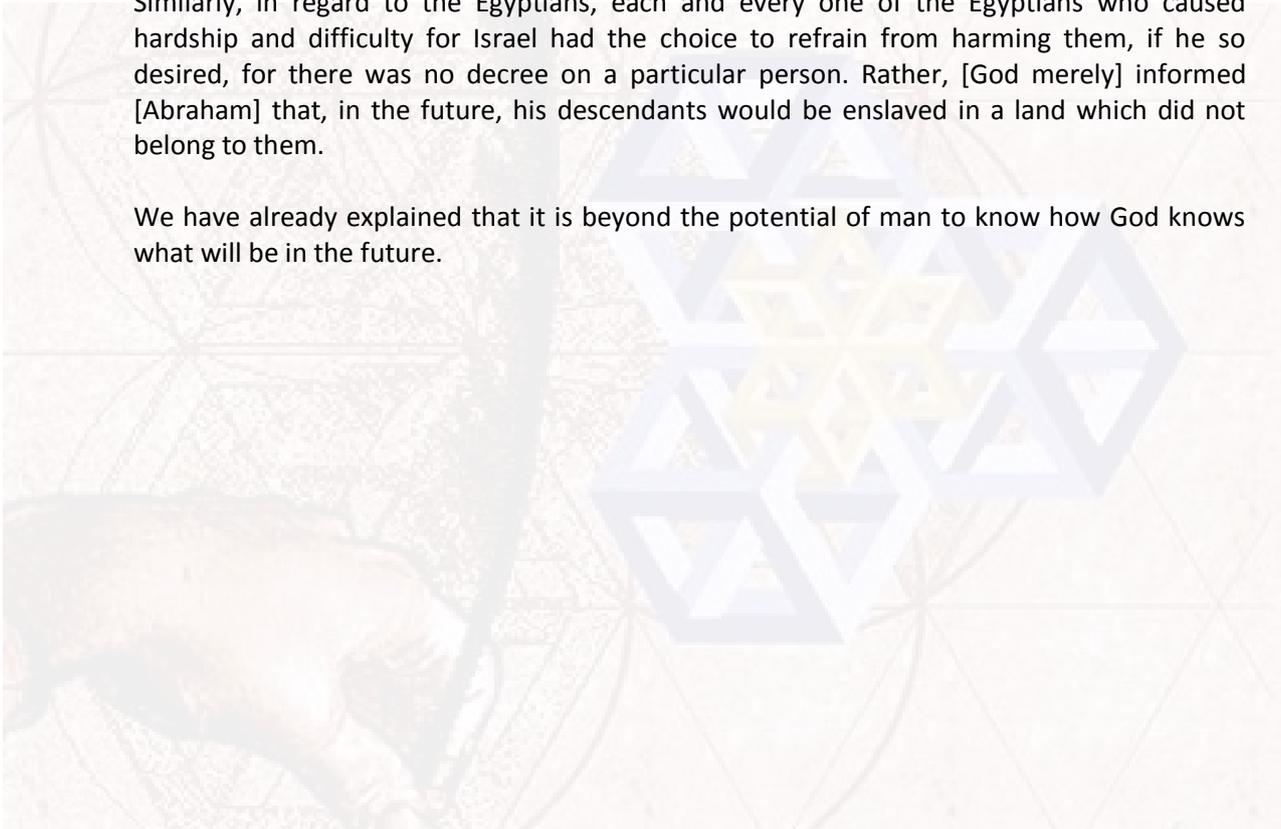
Similarly, it is written [Deuteronomy 31:16]: "And this nation will arise and stray after the alien gods of the land," [seemingly implying that] He decreed that Israel would serve idols. If so, why did He punish them?

Because He did not decree that a particular person would be the one who strayed. Rather, each and every one of those who strayed to idol-worship [could have chosen] not to serve idols if he did not desire to serve them. The Creator merely informed [Moses] of the pattern of the world.

To what can this be compared? To someone who says, there will be righteous and wicked people in this nation. [Thus,] a wicked person cannot say that because God told Moses that there will be wicked people in Israel, it is decreed that he will be wicked. A similar concept applies regarding the statement [Deuteronomy 15:11]: "The poor will never cease to exist in the land."

Similarly, in regard to the Egyptians, each and every one of the Egyptians who caused hardship and difficulty for Israel had the choice to refrain from harming them, if he so desired, for there was no decree on a particular person. Rather, [God merely] informed [Abraham] that, in the future, his descendants would be enslaved in a land which did not belong to them.

We have already explained that it is beyond the potential of man to know how God knows what will be in the future.



TRANSCRIPTION OF SHIUR BY RAV MATIS WEINBERG SHLITA – CHAPTER SIX

In the first five chapters we discovered a *teshuva* which becomes consistently broader. The first description of *teshuva* was started as a direct response to the sin. We then saw a more personal *teshuva* in which a person becomes close to Hashem, having at least the ability to recognise that he is insane (which is the main part of the viduy on Yom Kippur where we say “at least we are not mad enough to say *tzadikim anachnu ve lo chatanu*” the essential part of which is the recognition that we see ourselves for who we are, not for who we wish we were.) We also recognise that the previous generation also didn’t have it right. This vision recognises that we would essentially take any risk and suffer any deprivation just to have a life that is *ratzon Hashem* (in accordance with the wishes of the Creator.)

Teshuva, din and human consciousness are one and the same. The real meaning of *teshuva* is that it is existence on the level of a platform that is outside of all processes in which we experience life as a cutting moment, a cutting edge of reality. Therefore the 10 days of repentance begin with Rosh HaShana (and not Yom Kippur as we may well have expected) so as to provide us with an integrated and whole vision of ourselves which emerges from the numerous details of our lives, details which are too vast for us to realise even in our own minds how they impact on our existence; only Hashem can provide this integration. Rosh HaShana therefore expresses this idea, and allows us to live a life of *teshuva*. Rosh HaShana is essentially the day that demands consciousness. Therefore we use the shofar to wake people up, and most people are literally asleep. If we understand sleep as opposed to a waking state as being in some state in which only the stimulus of the moment is taken into consideration by your brain, there is really not any difference between the waking and sleeping state of most people’s lives

There become three ways of viewing the interconnectedness of this world and the next:

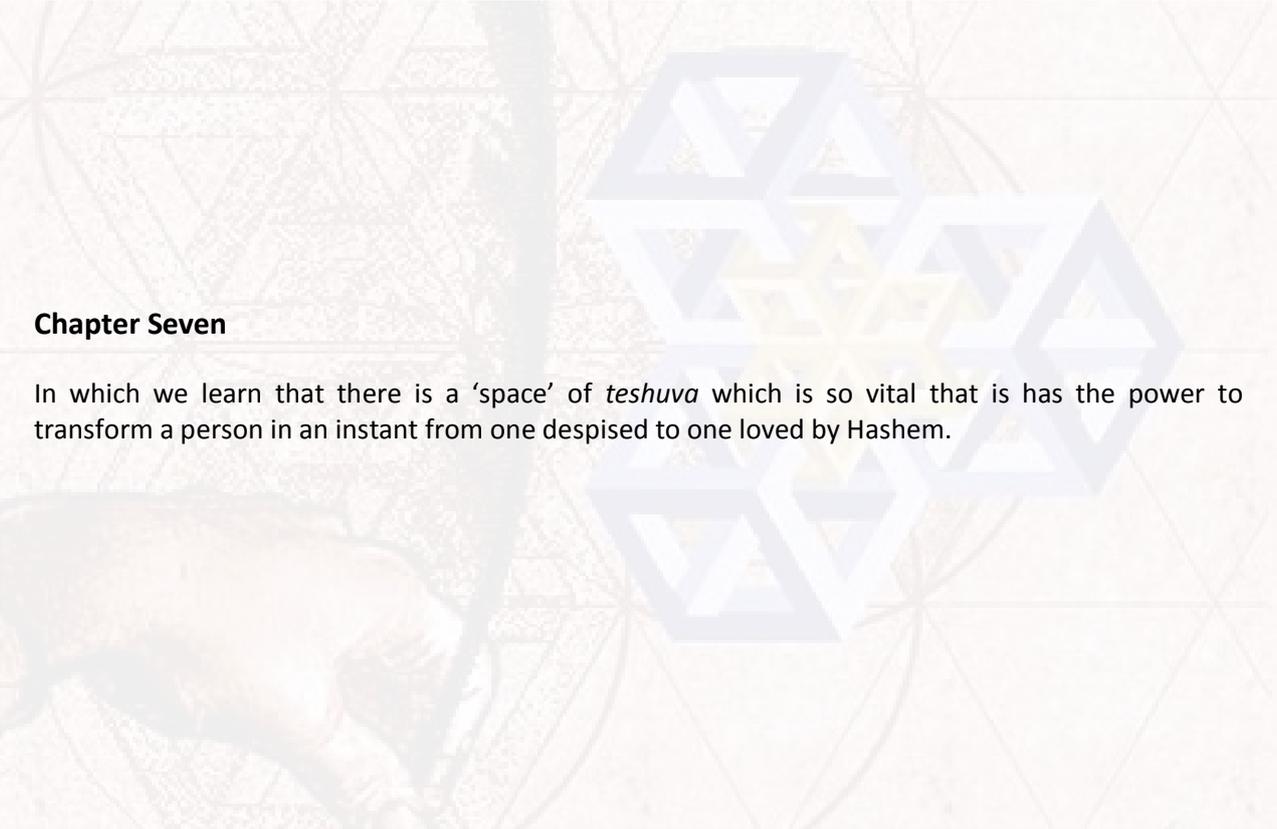
1. In the first chapter we saw a mechanistic view of the external reality defined by Hashem and a solipsistic reality defined by man. There is no real relation between the two other than the actions you do which affect an external reality.
2. In the third chapter we saw the universe as being an outgrowth of these who live within it, and that our actions affect the state of the world. *Teshuva* therefore becomes an extension of ourselves into the whole of existence. The power of *teshuva* is therefore infinitely greater than we thought it was because it is far more than simply taking responsibility for having screwed up. It means that I am part of the process, not a visitor of this process. One’s growth process or own emotions have nothing to do with *teshuva*. One must address the issues that one has committed, irrespective of one’s particular level. One should therefore (in the words of the Gemara) constantly check oneself to know whether one is *a Ben Olam HaBah* or not – and one can know this. Our consciousness is more powerful than we had realised and may affect the way that the universe actually is. This is the same as that which we see in physics that observing the world can have an effect on it in, and that the collapse of a wave function has something to do with its observation; which has prompted a debate regarding whether an animal’s observation of something collapses the wave function or not.
3. In the fifth chapter we said that not only is an individual more than an observer in reality but he can actually affect reality, and Hashem has given license to humans to reform reality. People can do what they want. The biggest thing that G-d wants is that man should be free. Just like we don’t ask why it is that when a man jumps out of the window why gravity carries him down to his death, we don’t ask why when we pull a trigger the bullet kills the target. There is now a human license for fantasy, in which we can live a fantasy, and we need to

recognise the problem of free will, where the experimenter has peaked at the results. The Rambam teaches us that it's not a problem, i.e. there is no contradiction between the fact that we have a licence, and that Hashem knows the state of the universe. Hashem's knowledge has no bearing or relevance on our lives. There is a difference between the mechanics of a world that was given over to us to be mechanical about and a universe which transcends mechanics.

In the sixth chapter the Rambam pretends that the issue at hand is that there are many things which contradict the idea of license. He begins with stating that he will explain a 'great concept.' Having explained the nature of a world that is mechanical but is impacted by human fantasies now creates a new idea. He suggests that since this is true there ought to be a significant response of the universe to you if you are actually impacting on it. So one who does something wrong deserves to be paid pack for it. It never occurred to him that people would read Hilchot Teshuva being concerned by pay back, they would be concerned by the nature of existence! The idea of payback is not expected to motivate one. He teaches us here that now that we know that we impact on reality, we get paid back for our mistakes.

The lowest level of *teshuva* we have described so far is where one seeks to make our own existence on some level consonant with the Will of Hashem. We now see that there is a lower level still, which is where a person recognises that he suffers because of his actions, and such a person's *teshuva* shields him from that suffering.

If *teshuva* is the ultimate self-creation how can a person ask for help? Isn't *teshuva* our responsibility rather than Hashem's? There are many prayers in which we ask that the moments of our life should mean something, and where we accept that our choices may have been so insane that we are no longer able to affect our choices.



Chapter Seven

In which we learn that there is a 'space' of *teshuvah* which is so vital that it has the power to transform a person in an instant from one despised to one loved by Hashem.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Chapter seven explains how wonderful the life of one who has repented is!

- 7.1. We are free to act as we please, and should therefore repent, confess our sins and distance ourselves from sin, so that when we die we should be considered a Baal Teshuva and merit the life of the World to Come.
- 7.2. One should consider oneself as being about to die and repent immediately, in case one dies without repenting.
- 7.3. Just as one ought to repent from sinful acts such as adultery or theft, so too one must repent from sinful thoughts such as anger, hatred, jealousy, greed and honour.
- 7.4. One who repents should not consider himself beneath the righteous who never sinned, because he is loved by Hashem and considered as if he never sinned, because he had tasted sin and nevertheless turned away from it. The one who has repented is considered more lofty than the perfectly righteous, because he has demonstrated greater control over his inclinations.
- 7.5. The prophets urged the Jewish people to repent because only this will bring the Redemption.
- 7.6. Repentance has the power to transform a person in an instant from being despised and loathsome to Hashem to being beloved and cherished to Him.
- 7.7. Consider how wonderful repentance is! One day a person can be separated from Hashem as it says: 'even your prayers I will not hear' and that our mitzvot are discredited 'who requested this from you, to trample my courts?' and 'if only there was one amongst you who would shut the doors [to the Temple] that you might not kindle fire on my Altar for nothing!' The very next day that person can beg to Hashem and will be answered immediately, will perform mitzvot and they will be accepted with joy.
- 7.8. One should be humble and even if one is reminded of the mistakes of the past should not become agitated but should simply remember that being reminded of the past is itself a source of merit, causing him to regret the mistakes of the past. It is a serious sin to remind a Baal Teshuva of their sins.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER – CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Read (7,3.) What is worse, a sinful act or sinful thought?
2. Is there anything wrong with a sinful thought if it doesn't hurt anyone else?
3. Read (7,4.) Can we really believe a sullied penitent is *holier* than a pure tzadik?
4. Why has he demonstrated greater control?
5. Can we know whether we have repented?
6. Read (7,7.) One who has not repented prays but Hashem doesn't listen, he performs the commands but Hashem isn't interested. It seems like he would outwardly present like a religious individual! If we cannot measure our relationship with Hashem by the quantity of rituals we perform, how can we know that we are not in this category??!!
7. We see that Hashem despises the sacrifices which are brought by the insincere. Would you imagine this applies to the other commandments as well?



FULL TEXT – CHAPTER SEVEN

- 7.1 Since free choice is granted to all men as explained, a person should always strive to do Teshuvah and to confess verbally for his sins, striving to cleanse his hands from sin in order that he may die as a Baal-Teshuvah and merit the life of the world to come.
- 7.2 A person should always view himself as leaning towards death, with the possibility that he might die at any time. Thus, he may be found as a sinner.

Therefore, one should always repent from his sins immediately and should not say: "When I grow older, I will repent," for perhaps he will die before he grows older. This was implied by the wise counsel given by Solomon [Ecclesiastes 9:8]: "At all times, your clothes should be white."

- 7.3 A person should not think that repentance is only necessary for those sins that involve deed such as promiscuity, robbery, or theft. Rather, just as a person is obligated to repent from these, similarly, he must search after the evil character traits he has. He must repent from anger, hatred, envy, frivolity, the pursuit of money and honor, the pursuit of gluttony, and the like. He must repent for all [of the above].

These sins are more difficult than those that involve deed. If a person is attached to these, it is more difficult for him to separate himself. In this context, [Isaiah 55:7] exhorts: "May the wicked abandon his path and the crooked man, his designs."

- 7.4 A Baal-Teshuvah should not consider himself distant from the level of the righteous because of the sins and transgressions that he committed. This is not true. He is beloved and desirable before the Creator as if he never sinned.

Furthermore, he has a great reward for he has tasted sin and yet, separated himself from it, conquering his [evil] inclination. Our Sages declared: "In the place where Baalei Teshuvah stand, even the completely righteous are not able to stand." The level of Baalei Teshuvah transcends the level of those who never sinned at all, for they overcome their [evil] inclination more.

- 7.5 All the prophets commanded [the people] to repent. Israel will only be redeemed through Teshuvah.

The Torah has already promised that, ultimately, Israel will repent towards the end of her exile and, immediately, she will be redeemed as [Deuteronomy 30:1-3] states: "There shall come a time when [you will experience] all these things... and you will return to God, your Lord.... God, your Lord, will bring back your [captivity]."

- 7.6 Teshuvah is great for it draws a man close to the Shechinah as [Hoshea 14:2] states: "Return, O Israel, to God, your Lord;" [Amos 4:6] states: "'You have not returned to Me,' declares God;" and [Jeremiah 4:1] states: "'If, you will return, O Israel,' declares God, 'You will return to Me.'" Implied is that if you will return in Teshuvah, you will cling to Me.

Teshuvah brings near those who were far removed. Previously, this person was hated by God, disgusting, far removed, and abominable. Now, he is beloved and desirable, close, and dear.

Similarly, we find God employs the same expression with which He separates [Himself] from

the sinners to draw close those who repent. [Hoshea 2:1] states: "Instead of saying to you: 'You are not My nation,' He will tell you: 'You are the children of the living God.'"

[Also, Jeremiah] speaks of Yecheniah while he was wicked [with the expression (22:30)]: "Write down this man as childless, a man who shall never prosper in his days," and [22:24]: "Would Cheniah, the son of Yehoyakim, king of Judah, be the signet ring on My right hand, I would tear him off." However, after he repented when in exile, [Chaggai 2:23] said concerning Zerubavel, his son: "'On that day,' declares the God of Hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubavel, the son of Shaltiel, My servant,' declares God, 'and I will place you as a signet ring.'"

- 7.7 How exalted is the level of Teshuvah! Previously, the [transgressor] was separate from God, the Lord of Israel, as [Isaiah 59:2] states: "Your sins separate between you and your God." He would call out [to God] without being answered as [Isaiah 1:15] states: "Even if you pray many times, I will not hear."

He would fulfill mitzvot, only to have them crushed before him as [Isaiah 1:12] states: "Who asked this from you, to trample in My courts," and [Malachi 1:10] states: "'O were there one among you who would shut the doors that you might not kindle fire on My altar for no reason! I have no pleasure in you,' says the God of Hosts, 'nor will I accept an offering from your hand.'"

Now, he is clinging to the Shechinah as [Deuteronomy 4:4] states: "And you who cling to God, your Lord." He calls out [to God] and is answered immediately as [Isaiah 65:24] states: "Before, you will call out, I will answer." He fulfills mitzvot and they are accepted with pleasure and joy as [Ecclesiastes 9:7] states, "God has already accepted your works," and [Malachi 3:4] states: "Then, shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasing to God as in days of old and as in the former years."

- 7.8 The manner of Baalei Teshuvah is to be very humble and modest.

If fools shame them because of their previous deeds, saying to them: "Yesterday, you would commit such and such [sins]. Yesterday, you would commit these and these [transgressions]," they will pay no attention to them. On the contrary, they will hear [this abuse] and rejoice, knowing that it is a merit for them.

Whenever they are embarrassed for the deeds they committed and shamed because of them, their merit increases and their level is raised.

It is a utter sin to tell a Baal Teshuvah, "Remember your previous deeds," or to recall them in his presence to embarrass him or to mention the surrounding circumstances or other similar matters so that he will recall what he did. This is all forbidden. We are warned against it within the general category of verbal abuse which Torah has warned us against as [Leviticus 25:17] states: "A man should not mistreat his colleague."

TRANSCRIPTION OF SHIUR BY RAV MATIS WEINBERG SHLITA – CHAPTER SEVEN

The Rambam defines the 'space' of *teshuva* in this chapter. The very fact that *teshuva* creates a space has two important implications:

1. Firstly this concept of the space of *teshuva* allows us to differentiate between the process of creating *teshuva* and the process of repenting for a particular act. All along we have assumed that the introductory words of the first chapter of 'when he does *teshuva* and repents from his sin' referred to two different ways of performing one process. Actually we now understand that these words were teaching that we need to create the space of *teshuva*. This space is the entirety of the human lifespan from cradle to grave, and is meant to incorporate the entirety of the history of the Jewish nation. Once you live in that milieu you will undoubtedly succeed in achieving a level of *teshuva* because that will be all that your experience leads to. There is nothing else that is real to you, and all else will be seen as violations of reality. Within that space it is therefore possible to deal with things that were done, which you can now see made no sense within the real world of *teshuva*.
2. Because there is a concept of the space of *teshuva*, it means that everything that is done in life either exists within that space or not. We had initially understood the first chapter as facing the reality that the things that matter really do matter, and the things that don't matter really don't matter, and we therefore reframe our vision of reality. This though is childish. Space after all relates to what's in it, which we have recently discovered in modern physics because there is no such thing as a space that exists outside of the context of that which is defined within it. Therefore you need to understand that you cannot come from another vaguely analogous space and attempt to address issues which reside in a different universe. The first astounding implication of this is that the mitzvot, prayer and all kind acts are all only important when lived within the context of *teshuva*. When they are performed outside of this context a person can perform all the mitzvot in the Torah and it will account to little, they can pray and nobody will listen to them because they are not talking to Hashem. The Rambam's amazing proof for this is that 'when you come to the Mishkan, who ever asked you for these [meaningless and worthless] sacrifices?' How, when the Mishkan is the centre of the Torah and the offerings are the fundamental activity performed there, when the only rights to the land of Israel are the merit of the korbanot, can we seriously ask 'who requested these sacrifices'?! Therefore this cannot refer to the Mishkan itself, but rather the *chatzer* (courtyard), which defines the space of the Mishkan. A mitzva that takes place in any context other than the context of the reality which is the reality that you have access to only through *teshuva* is not considered to ever be a mitzva. Therefore if someone is doing a mitzva which is not consistent with reality, which accepts that it is fine for me to steal paper clips from the bank, that person does not fulfil any mitzvah whatsoever. His values are not G-d's values. That person may perform commandments, but they are not Hashem's commandments. That person may believe in a deity analogous and even similar to Hashem, but it will not be Hashem and so we cannot expect Hashem to listen, be attentive and be responsive, when we are effectively communicating with someone else!

The events of Creation are defined by *teshuva*, which is described as being better than anything else that exists. The Gemara in Menachot 29b states that this world is likened to the Hebrew letter hey because its shape describes the nature of this world in that there is a small space called *Teshuva* through which one who wants can climb, and save themselves. This

begs the question as to whether we perform the *mitzvot* because Hashem gave us the *mitzvot*, or because we want to be religious? If we simply are following a path towards a religion, any religion, we are walking along the path towards idolatry.

Addressing an issue from a therapists couch is not repentance; it is simply the act of living in an aware and mature style. Just because one fixed ones relationship with ones parents, as encouraged by ones therapist, does not imply that one has performed the Torah obligation to honour ones parents.

As we have now progressed beyond a view of the world as being defined by mechanics. *Teshuva* does not address what we do. It addresses who we are. Do we overeat, do we get angry, do we do anything that removes us from a real life? *Teshuva* obligates us to live a real life in every single act. *Teshuva* is therefore entry into the space of Hashem. Life is therefore simply all or nothing. Rabenu Yona makes this point by asking why Ethics of our Fathers states '*ain am ha'aretz chasid*⁵' (an ingoramous will never be pious) – why doesn't it say '*ain am haaretz tzadik*' (an ignoramous will never be righteous)? The answer is that in living within the space of *teshuva* we live in a mindset of piety aspiring towards and dedicating our lives towards righteousness, which may or may not ever be achieved. This is just like a scientist who knows that much of what he believes is going to turn out to be nonsense, yet we don't view him as a primitive pre-scientific person, because the very fact that he is committed to the uncovering of truth in whatever form it will take means that he lives within the space of science. The same is true of Torah; a person may well say 'I am an Am Haaretz and I do not know the Torah' but should also add that 'I have no interest in being anywhere else, I am dedicating my life to ripping out any idiotic beliefs that I have. I am not interested in being a fool, I have a short life and I want it to be meaningful.' It really doesn't matter at that point whether one sees the final result or not, they have dedicated their life to it. In a similar way one may live within the space of *geula* (redemption) and experience the joy of having lived in that space even though it may happen 1,000 years after his death.

To live in this space of *teshuva* is to live in a state of constant growth and change, to have less hang-ups and more honesty, having more integrity and less religious agendas. The difference between the way a person changes themselves and the way a person changes is that the latter provides for a space that is emergent. This is what is so bad about reminding a person of their previous sins, not because it embarrasses them but because it robs them of the new context they have created for themselves. It is this exact idea that explains why Rosh HaShana is the entry into the space of *teshuva*, clarifying ones vision of reality first. The purpose of the day isn't the din, but the space that responds to din. We picture Hashem sitting there wanting the world, and we see how much Hashem loves life.

⁵ Pirkei Avot (2,5)

Chapter Eight

In which we consider the relationship between this world and the next, and see that Heaven is a place on Earth.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

The theme of chapter eight is the definition of the World to Come.

- 8.1. The good that is hidden for the righteous is the eternal life of the World to Come. One who is punished with Karet, (lit. cutting off) does not merit the World to Come and dies like an animal.
- 8.2. The World to Come is a purely spiritual place, and there is no eating, drinking or sexual relations there. When the sages said that “the righteous have crowns placed on their heads and delight in Hashem’s presence” this was means metaphorically; sitting referring to the absence of work, crowns on their heads referring to the wisdom that allowed them to merit the World to Come.
- 8.3. Death is an event which happens to the body. As the existence of the World to Come is an experience of the soul, it is eternal.
- 8.4. The Sages typically referred to the eternal reward using the term the ‘World to Come’.
- 8.5. The worst punishment that can be given is not to merit the World to Come.
- 8.6. The good of the World to Come is beyond our comprehension and is not comparable to any worldly bodily pleasure. Pay no attention to the thinking of the foolish Arabs who imagine it to be a physical and lustful experience.
- 8.7. Whilst there were prophecies concerning the Messianic Age, there never were prophecies concerning the World to Come, which is by definition unknowable to these in This World.
- 8.8. The term ‘The World to Come’ does not imply that this World does not exist now, rather it only describes the fact that it is the reality that follows this reality.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER – CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Do you believe in the World to Come?
2. Why?
3. Read (8,1.) Why compare a person without the World to Come to an animal?
4. What is the definition of the 'World to Come'? What happens there?!
5. What is more important, this world or the next?
6. What is so foolish about the thinking of the Arabs!?
7. What does the Rambam mean by saying that the World to Come exists now? How can that be?
8. How do you imagine the relationship between who a person is in this world, and who they are in the next world?
9. Why can't Heaven be a place on Earth? Why do we need a World to Come, couldn't we be rewarded in this world for the good that we do?



FULL TEXT – CHAPTER EIGHT

- 8.1 The good that is hidden for the righteous is the life of the world to come. This will be life which is not accompanied by death and good which is not accompanied by evil. The Torah alludes to this in [the promise, Deuteronomy 22:7]: "So that good will be granted you and you will live long."

The oral tradition explains: "So that good will be granted you" - in the world that is entirely good; "and you will live long" - in the world which is endlessly long, the world to come.

The reward of the righteous is that they will merit this pleasure and take part in this good. The retribution of the wicked is that they will not merit this life. Rather, they will be cut off and die.

Whoever does not merit this life is [truly] dead and will not live forever. Rather, he will be cut off in his wickedness and perish as a beast. This is the intent of the meaning of the term *karet* in the Torah as [Numbers 15:31] states: "That soul shall surely be cut off."

[Based on the repetition of the verb,] the oral tradition explains: *hikaret* means to be cut off in this world and *tikaret*, to be cut off in the world to come. After these souls become separated from bodies in this world, they will not merit the life of the world to come. Rather, even in the world to come, they will be cut off.

- 8.2 In the world to come, there is no body or physical form, only the souls of the righteous alone, without a body, like the ministering angels. Since there is no physical form, there is neither eating, drinking, nor any of the other bodily functions of this world like sitting, standing, sleeping, death, sadness, laughter, and the like.

Thus, the Sages of the previous ages declared: "In the world to come, there is neither eating, drinking, nor sexual relations. Rather, the righteous will sit with their crowns on their heads and delight in the radiance of the Divine Presence."

From that statement, it is clear that there is no body, for there is no eating or drinking. [Consequently,] the statement, "the righteous sit," must be interpreted metaphorically, i.e., the righteous exist there without work or labor.

Similarly, the phrase, "their crowns on their heads," [is also a metaphor, implying] that they will possess the knowledge that they grasped which allowed them to merit the life of the world to come. This will be their crown. A similar [usage of this metaphor was employed by] Solomon [Song of Songs 3:11]: "The crown with which his mother crowned him."

[Support for the concept that this does not refer to a physical crown can be brought from the prophecy, Isaiah 51:11]: "Eternal joy will be upon their heads." Joy is not a physical entity which can rest on a head. Similarly, the expression "crown" used by the Sages [refers to a spiritual concept], knowledge.

What is meant by the expression, "delight in the radiance of the Divine Presence"? That they will comprehend the truth of Godliness which they cannot grasp while in a dark and humble body.

- 8.3 The term "soul" when used in this context does not refer to the soul which needs the body, but rather to "the form of the soul," the knowledge which it comprehends according to its

power. Similarly, it comprehends abstract concepts and other matters. This is "the form" whose nature we described in the fourth chapter of Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah. This is the soul referred to in this context.

Since this life is not accompanied by death - for death is an event associated with the body alone and, in that realm, there is no body - it is called "the bond of life," as [I Samuel 25:29] states: "And the soul of my master will be bound up in the bond of life." This is the reward above which there is no higher reward and the good beyond which there can be [other] good. This was [the good] desired by all the prophets.

- 8.4 How many metaphoric terms have been used to refer to [the world to come]! "The mountain of God" [Psalms 24:3], "His holy place" [ibid.], "the holy path" [Isaiah 35:8], "the courtyards of God" [Psalms 65:5, 92:14], "the pleasantness of God" [ibid. 27:4], "the tent of God" [ibid. 15:1], "the palace of God" [ibid. 5:8], "the house of God" [ibid. 27:4], "the gate of God" [ibid. 118:20].

The Sages referred to this good which is prepared for the righteous with the metaphor: "the feast." Generally, it is referred to with the term "the world to come."

- 8.5 The retribution beyond which there is no greater retribution is that the soul will be cut off and not merit this life as [Numbers 15:31] states: "This soul shall surely be cut off. His sin shall remain upon him."

This refers to the obliteration of the soul which was referred to by the prophets with the following metaphoric terms: "the pit of destruction" [Psalms 55:24], "obliteration" [ibid. 88:12], "the bonfire" [Isaiah 30:33], "the leech" [Proverbs 30:15]. All the synonyms for nullification and destruction are used to refer to it for it is the [ultimate] nullification after which there is no renewal and the [ultimate] loss which can never be recovered.

- 8.6 Lest you think lightly of this good, [the world to come], imagining that the reward for the mitzvot and for a person [following] completely the paths of truth is for him to eat and drink good foods, have intercourse with beautiful forms, wear garments of linen and lace, dwell in ivory palaces, use utensils of gold and silver, or other similar ideas, as conceived by the foolish, decadent Arabs, who are flooded with lewdness.

In contrast, the sages and men of knowledge know that all these matters are vain and empty things, without any purpose. They are only considered of great benefit to us in this world because we possess a body and a physical form. All these matters are the needs of the body. The soul only desires them and lusts for them because of the needs of the body, so that its desires will be fulfilled and its health maintained. In a situation, where there is no body, all of these matters will be nullified.

There is no way in this world to grasp and comprehend the ultimate good which the soul will experience in the world to come.

We only know bodily good and that is what we desire. However, that [ultimate] good is overwhelmingly great and cannot be compared to the good of this world except in a metaphoric sense.

In truth, there is no way to compare the good of the soul in the world to come to the bodily goods of this world. Rather, that good is infinitely great, with no comparison or likeness. This

is alluded to by David's statement [Psalms 31:20]: "How great is the good that You have hidden for those who fear You."

- 8.7 How very much did David desire the life of the world as implied by [Psalms 27:13]: "Had I not believed that I would see the goodness of God in the land of the living!"

The Sages of the previous generations have already informed us that man does not have the potential to appreciate the good of the world to come in a full sense nor can anyone know its greatness, beauty, and power except God, alone.

All the beneficence which the prophets promised Israel in their visions are only physical concerns which Israel will appreciate in the Messianic age when dominion [over the world] will return to Israel. However, the good of the life of the world to come has no comparison or likeness, nor was it described by the prophets, lest with such a description, they diminish it.

This [was implied] by [Isaiah's (64:3)] statement: "No eye has ever seen, O God, except for You, what You will do for those who wait for You;" i.e. the good which was not perceived by the vision of a prophet and is perceived by God alone, this was created by God for those who wait for Him.

The Sages declared: "All the prophets only prophesied about the Messianic Age. However, regarding the world to come - 'No eye has ever seen, O God, except for You.'

- 8.8 The Sages did not use the expression "the world to come" with the intention of implying that [this realm] does not exist at present or that the present realm will be destroyed and then, that realm will come into being.

The matter is not so. Rather, [the world to come] exists and is present as implied by [Psalms 31:20: "How great is the good] that You have hidden... which You have made...." It is only called the world to come because that life comes to a man after life in this world in which we exist, as souls [encloded] in bodies. This [realm of existence] is presented to all men at first.

TRANSCRIPTION OF SHIUR BY RAV MATIS WEINBERG SHLITA – CHAPTER EIGHT

In this chapter the Rambam defines the nature of *Olam HaBah* (the World to Come). *Hilchot Teshuva* is built around the recognition of there being multiple levels within human life and consciousness, and that the emergence of our thinking, actions and knowledge is our *Olam HaBah*.

Reward and punishment is described in terms as having or not having *Olam HaBah*. We had in chapter 4 a list of these who lose their share in *Olam HaBah*, but even from the perspective of chapter 4 these who would have *Olam HaBah* would not from the perspective of chapter 8 necessarily merit *Olam HaBah*. It is possible to have *Olam HaBah* but not merit it, just like one can have an inheritance that one never picks up. One has the estate but has no awareness of what it is that it has. So too one who goes through the motions of a religious life may have *Olam HaBah*, but that is a different thing entirely to the one who lives *teshuva* and merits *Olam HaBah*.

The central point of this chapter is how *Olam HaBah* impacts on *Olam HaZeh* (this world.) We see in the closing halacha that the meaning of *Olam HaBah* is not that it is a world that is to come, which misses the whole point, but it is called a World to Come only because it emerges from one's activities in this world, however it is a world that exists concomitantly with this world – it's not true to say that there is one world now, and then another one after. One is basically living within two levels of existence at the same time. The world 'to Come' is purely subjectively, it is only for us because we don't experience this reward now, and that it only matters to us when it's all over – which is the opposite of what is true – that the World to Come matters now, that it is our existence now. This ties in with the idea that the resurrection of the dead is not the equivalent of *Olam HaBah*, which is a separate event where a person once again lives in this world, and then dies again! There are always methods to access *Olam HaBah* in *Olam HaZeh*, and it makes no sense to say that this world here and now has no meaning but that we retroactively recreate a meaningful life from meaningless time periods. Rather the valuable and poignant moments that we achieve in *Olam HaZeh* are always there in *Olam HaBah*. The feeling that we have that we live in time and that things that happen in the past are still there is because we deeply understand that these moments are always part of the universe and that they make the world eternal for us. Such moments are therefore not limited in time, and any meaningful moment to us (our birth, death, a particular moment..) is always meaningful. We need to know that our lives are forever, that we will always have everything that we had. There is just this life, and we must make the most of it. It is idiotic to think that this world is fundamentally meaningless, and that the only thing that matters is that we get our wings in the next world, the next world must also be meaningless. The elements which are uniquely human must be active in our life, we must use every day to activate that which makes us human. Where there is no *Olam HaBah* there is no *Olam HaZeh*, and we are basically animals.

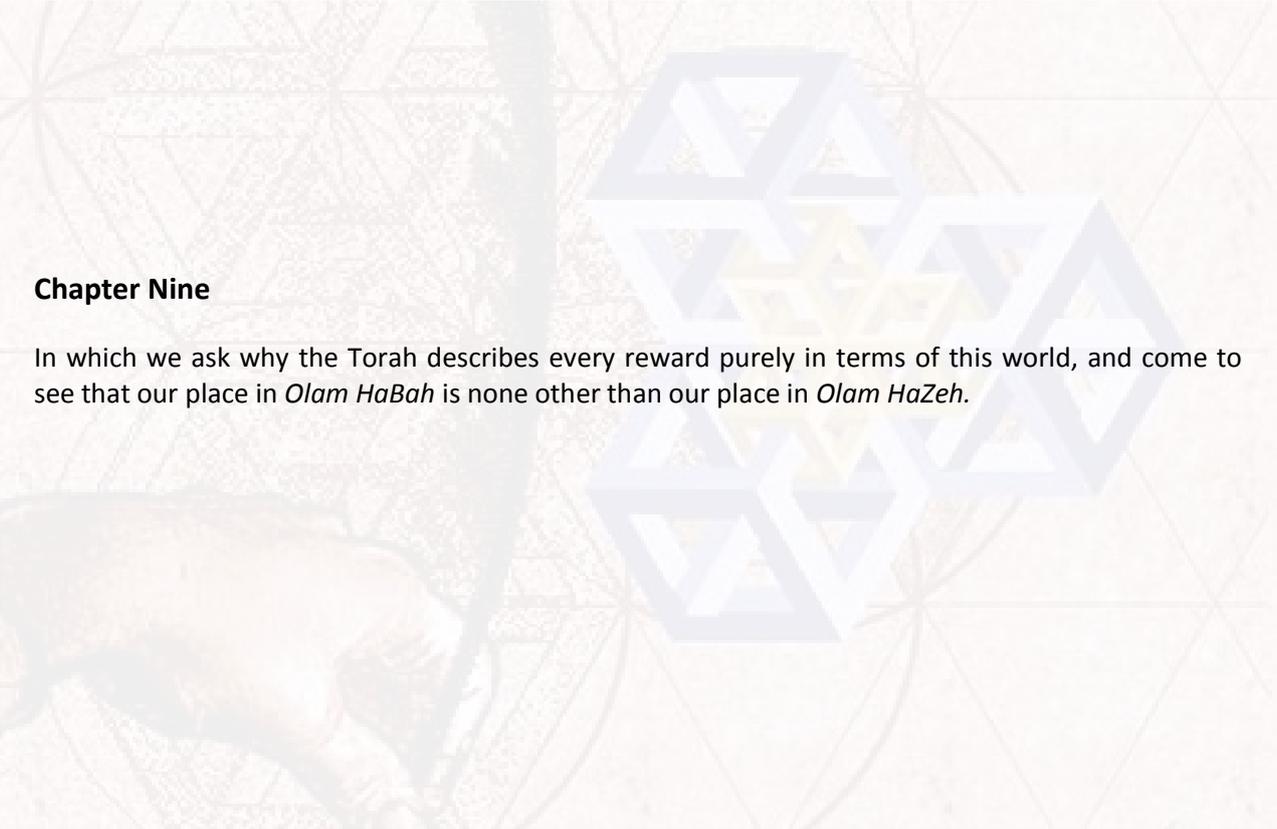
If we live our life in terms of emergence we carry with us a spark that makes life worth living, and if we don't, where will it come from? A person can say that I'm happy with this life, I don't want the next world. The point is that in order to have this world you need to have the next world here and now. The difference between having this is the difference between reading about art and experiencing art, the difference between mechanics and humanity, between sex and love. To see people determined to live a life that is bereft of everything that is specifically human and to take all of their powers and use them as a pure Darwinian machine is tragic beyond belief.

Can our life in all its totality be reduced to no more than our evolutionary drives? To our

protoplasm? *Olam HaBah* is a totally new dimension of existence and this chapter strips us from our limitations. *Teshuva* therefore just shouts out to you, that I don't want to be limited to just this, and there is not a minute in this world that is not part of the world to come; it is always available to us. There is such a sense of loss about life; lost opportunities and lost relationships. *Teshuva* takes this loss and makes it a particularly human condition, which itself is the very taste of the world to come.

There are such ugly moments to life, but on an emergent level these ugly moments contain the potential for *Olam HaBah*. All of our lives are over before they began anyway, so our suffering seems irrelevant, all that matters is whether our eternal life is empowered or not.





Chapter Nine

In which we ask why the Torah describes every reward purely in terms of this world, and come to see that our place in *Olam HaBah* is none other than our place in *Olam HaZeh*.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

The theme of chapter nine is the relationship between our actions in this world and our station in the next world.

- 9.1. We have seen in the previous chapter that the reward for the righteous and the punishment for the wicked occur in the next world. How then do we understand the Torah's promises of plenty or famine, war or peace, inheritance of the land or exile from it, which imply that by keeping the Torah we will enjoy benefits in **this** world?

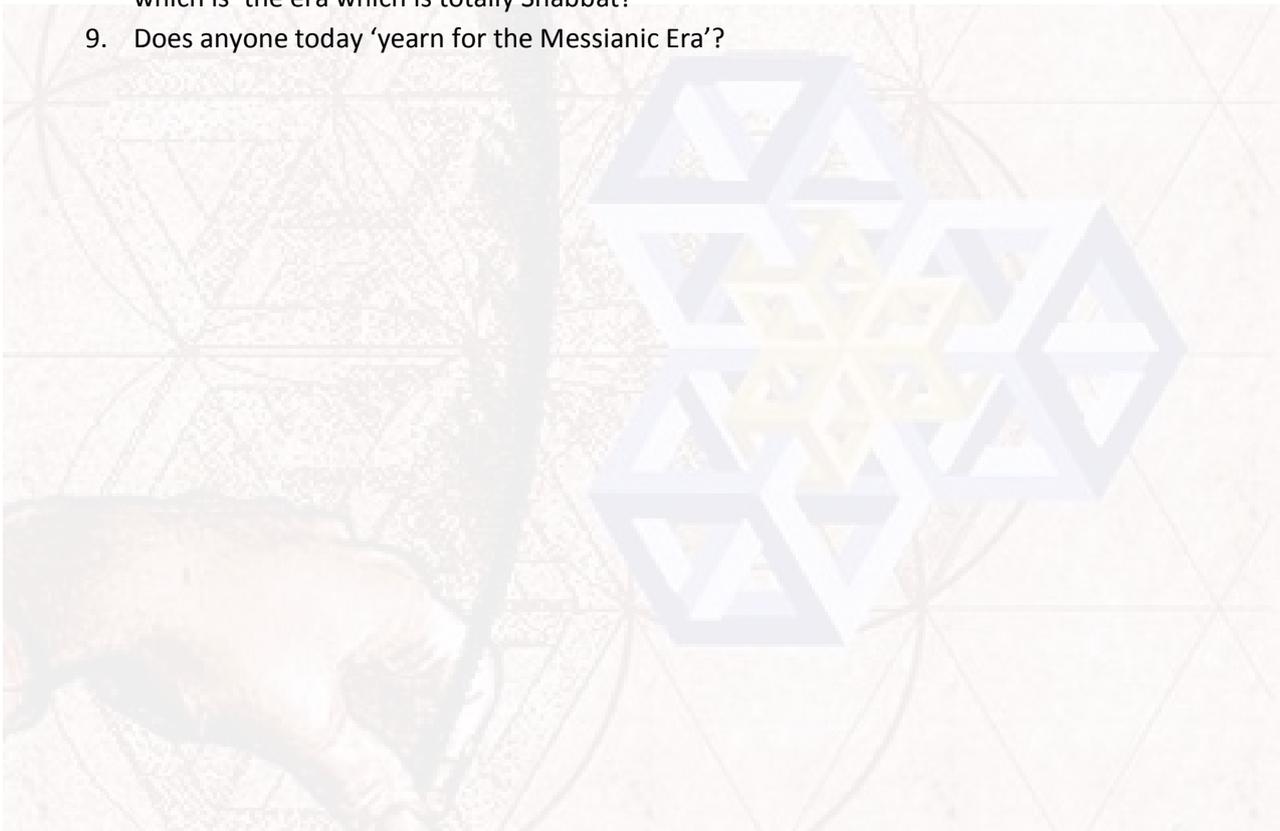
We must believe that these benefits are true, and will come to us. However they are not the ultimate reward, which is deferred until the next world. The deeper reason why we are given the benefits of plentiful food, peaceful neighbourly relations, dwelling in the land of Israel is because when we start keeping the Torah we merit the physical context and surroundings to allow us to continue keeping the Torah.

We thus see that one who fulfils the words of the Torah happily, with a joyful heart, inherits both the benefits of this world and the ultimate reward in the world to come. Conversely one who occupies themselves with mere physical gratification and neglects the Torah will forfeit their Heavenly reward and also find that they become preoccupied in this world with sickness, war, hunger etc which prevent them from fulfilling the Torah.

- 9.2. The reason why the Sages yearned for the Messianic Era is because all of the physical impediments to Divine service will be removed, and the Jewish nation can fulfil their historic mission without fear of persecution.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER – CHAPTER NINE

1. Read (9,1.) Do we experience this to be true?
2. Must we believe anything in Judaism which is contradicted by our experience or reality?
3. Can we know whether we ourselves, or someone else, are genuinely observing the Torah?
4. The text states that *“When we start keeping the Torah we merit the physical context and surroundings to allow us to continue keeping the Torah.”* This really is the ‘best of both worlds!’ Do you believe it?
5. What is more important, this world or the next?
6. What is the purpose of this world?
7. What is the difference between *Olam HaBah* and the Messianic Era? What is the connection between them and does mentioning both in the same chapter imply a thematic equivalence?
8. How will there still be service and work – isn’t the utopian vision of the Messianic Age one which is ‘the era which is totally Shabbat?’
9. Does anyone today ‘yearn for the Messianic Era’?



FULL TEXT – CHAPTER NINE

9.1 [A question arises:] As explained, the reward for the mitzvot and the good which we will merit if we observe the path of God as prescribed by the Torah is the world to come as [Deuteronomy 2:7] states: "So that good will be granted you and you will live long."

[Also,] the retribution which is exacted from the wicked who abandon the paths of righteous prescribed by the Torah is karet as [Numbers 15:31] states: "This soul shall surely be cut off. His sin shall remain upon him."

[If so,] what is the meaning of the [statements] made throughout the entire Torah: "If you observe [the Torah's laws], you will acquire such and such;" "If you do not observe [the Torah's laws], such and such will happen to you?" All [of the benefits and difficulties that are promised] are matters of this [material] world, for example, plenty and famine, war and peace, sovereignty [over other nations] or a humble [national standing], the settlement of the land or exile, success in one's deeds or loss and all the other points mentioned in the covenant.

[In resolution, it must be stated that] all those statements are true. They have been realized in the past and will be realized in the future. When we fulfill all the mitzvot in the Torah, we will acquire all the benefits of this world. [Conversely,] when we transgress them, the evils written [in the Torah] will occur.

Nevertheless, those benefits are not the ultimate reward for the mitzvot, nor are those evils the ultimate retribution to be exacted from someone who transgresses all the mitzvot. Rather, the resolution of the matter is as follows: God gave us this Torah which is a tree of life. Whoever fulfills what is written within it and comprehends it with complete and proper knowledge will merit the life of the world to come. A person merits [a portion of the world to come] according to the magnitude of his deeds and the extent of his knowledge.

[In addition,] we are promised by the Torah that if we fulfill it with joy and good spirit and meditate on its wisdom at all times, [God] will remove all the obstacles which prevent us from fulfilling it, for example, sickness, war, famine, and the like.

Similarly, He will grant us all the good which will reinforce our performance of the Torah, such as plenty, peace, an abundance of silver and gold in order that we not be involved throughout all our days in matters required by the body, but rather, will sit unburdened and [thus, have the opportunity to] study wisdom and perform mitzvot in order that we will merit the life of the world to come.

This [principle is expressed] by the Torah. After [Deuteronomy 6:11-12] promises us all the benefits of this world, it concludes [ibid.:25]: "And charity will remain for us if we take care to perform [all these commandments]."

Similarly, the Torah has informed us that if we consciously abandon the Torah and involve ourselves in the vanities of the time in a manner similar to that stated [by Deuteronomy 32:15]: "Jeshurun became fat and rebelled," then, the True Judge will remove from all the benefits of this world which reinforce their rebellion those who abandoned [the Torah].

He will bring upon them all the evils which prevent them from acquiring [a portion in] the world to come so that they will be destroyed in their wickedness. This was implied by the Torah's statement [Deuteronomy 28:47-48]: "Because you did not serve God, [your Lord,

with happiness,]... you will serve your enemies whom God sends against you."

Thus, these blessings and curses can be interpreted as follows: If you serve God with happiness and observe His way, He will grant you these blessings and remove these curses from you in order that you may be free to gain wisdom from the Torah and involve yourselves in it so that you will merit the life of the world to come. "Good will be granted you" - in the world that is entirely good; "and you will live long" - in the world which is endlessly long, [the world to come].

Thus, you will merit two worlds, a good life in this world, which, in turn, will bring you to the life of the world to come. For if a person will not acquire wisdom in this world and he does not possess good deeds, with what will he merit [a portion in the world to come]? [Thus, Ecclesiastes 9:10] states: "There is no work, no accounting, no knowledge, and no wisdom in the grave."

[Conversely,] if you have abandoned God and become obsessed with food, drink, lewdness, and the like, He will bring all these curses upon you and remove all blessing until you will conclude all your days in confusion and fear. You will not have a free heart or a complete body to fulfill the mitzvot in order that you forfeit the life of the world to come.

Thus, you will forfeit two worlds for when a person is occupied in this world with sickness, war, and hunger, he cannot involve himself with either wisdom or mitzvot which allow him to merit the life of the world to come.

9.2 For these reasons, all Israel, [in particular,] their prophets and their Sages, have yearned for the Messianic age so they can rest from the [oppression of] the gentile kingdoms who do not allow them to occupy themselves with Torah and mitzvot properly. They will find rest and increase their knowledge in order to merit the world to come.

In that era, knowledge, wisdom, and truth will become abundant. [Isaiah 11:9] states, "The earth will be full of the knowledge of God." [Jeremiah 31:33] states: "One man will no longer teach his brother, nor a man his colleague... [for all will know Me]." And [Ezekiel 36:26] states: "I will take away the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

[These changes will come about] because the king who will arise from David's descendants will be a greater master of knowledge than Solomon and a great prophet, close to the level of Moses, our teacher. Therefore, he will teach the entire nation and instruct them in the path of God.

All the gentile nations will come to hear him as [Isaiah 2:2] states: "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of God's house shall be established at the peak of the mountains... [and all the nations shall flow to it]."

[Nevertheless,] the ultimate of all reward and the final good which will have no end or decrease is the life of the world to come. In contrast, the Messianic age will be [life within the context of] this world, with the world following its natural pattern except that sovereignty will return to Israel.

The Sages of the previous generations have already declared: "There is no difference between the present age and the Messianic era except [the emancipation] from our subjugation to the [gentile] kingdoms."

TRANSCRIPTION OF SHIUR BY RAV MATIS WEINBERG SHLITA – CHAPTER NINE

We have gone through step by step the way in which the Rambam develops his vision of *Teshuva* in each consecutive chapter. The first chapter began with the idea that a person needs to see the world as it is, and that the way that they can correct the wrong that they have done is through magic; by bringing a *korban*. The essence of the first chapter was achieving an objective individual reality. The human beings psyche is irrelevant both as to why they happened to sin in the first place, and what happens to now be driving their *teshuva*. From the perspective of the first chapter we are only concerned with actions.

In the second chapter the drive to *teshuva* become the drive to have a relationship with Hashem, and seek to achieve some level of the human awareness of what is wrong with oneself. The things we look at are the ways that a person can let go of what they have done by making Hashem Himself a witness that a person is trying to be a different person.

In the third chapter we discovered a deeper connection between the individual and the world, seeing a connection between processes that one goes through and the reality that emerges from them. So we understand that our actions create state of beings (both of the universe and of an individual.) Because we have gone from an objective observer and an objective universe to a subjective universe with a subjective observer we come to a more conscious and more responsive vision of *teshuva*. *Teshuva* therefore encompasses awareness and memory, and the main mitzvah in this chapter is the need for integrated consciousness, which is why we need Shofar. Rosh HaShana is the focus of this chapter rather than Yom Kippur because it deals with personal rather than existential renewal.

The fourth chapter introduced us to the concept of a World to Come, and set out all the ways in which one can lose ones part in the World to Come. It set out twenty four different things that can play havoc with ones *teshuva*.

The fifth chapter addressed *teshuva* from the perspective of human license. The nature of the world is a function of human actions, and from the moment of the sin of *Adam HaRishon* we have the ability to perform acts that Hashem does not want us to. The state of the universe is therefore entirely in our hands. *Teshuva* is the fundamental tool for personal and universal recreation, and everything that is in our hands we must take responsibility for.

The sixth chapter discusses the interrelationship of the idea of human freedom and the ability to utilise *teshuva*. It explains that the nature of *teshuva* is different to the nature of license. There are consequences to actions that are so powerful that they can make it impossible to do *teshuva*. There is no kind of contradiction between the awareness of G-d in the world and the process which leads the world to be made. The fact that G-d knows what He wants, and that He created this particular world is in no way relevant to our ability to act within the world. It is a universe of statistics but it in no way changes our relationship to things. There are profound interrelationships between different levels of reality, which are not mechanical.

The seventh chapter discusses the space that allows for *teshuva*. That space creates a context which allows one to merit the next world and to die as a *Baal Tehuva*. The power of *teshuva* is that in a moment a person can go from performing mitzvot which are meaningless, who is despised by Hashem and who lives in a different universe to Hashem, to being a person who is loved and appreciated and it is as if he never did anything wrong.

The eight chapter teaches us to have a genuine concern for things of enduring worth, rather

than counterfeit things which seem important but are not. It is almost impossible for a human being to just want to live a life as an animal, ripping out all love and care from their life – because we always feel that there must be something more or something greater than just this world. *Olam HaBah* is an ongoing reality and defines the truth of our lives.

The ninth chapter defines the relationship between the life as we live it which seems mechanical and the life that we are supposed to be living which is not mechanical. Why does the Torah constantly and consistently talk about how wonderful this world is? Why does the Torah talk about mechanics? We are told that life is all about emergence, and yet we see that all the rewards revolve around rain, crops, peace etc. The Rambam distinguishes between having a place in *Olam HaBah* and being a Ben *Olam HaBah*. One who leaves all his money to the dog knows that the dog will have everything that it could ever want, but we relate to it as a painful shame because it lacks the awareness to appreciate it. The same is true for us as we can have a great portion in *Olam HaBah* (by going through the motions of a religious life) but can live a dog's life there (by not having the appreciation and connection with Hashem that *teshuva* would have provided.) To the extent to that a person can relate to things and can appreciate and understand things is the extent to which their appreciation will be of the part of *Olam HaBah* that they have.

You need to know that everything that *Olam HaZeh* offers you is real, in that there is no other opportunity to live – this is the life that you have. What you do with your life and what you achieve is all that you are ever going to have. What would the point be of talking to you in terms of *Olam HaBah*? *Olam HaBah* is meaningless and is a simple myth with nothing to do with your life, the only thing that is important is the way that this world can emerge into the next world. If it would focus on the next world it would reduce this world to a process. The more you have of this world the more you will be capable of achieving the things that really matter. The fact that the nature of relationship is expressed in terms of this world is a deep promise because it includes *Olam HaBah* as well. If you betray the covenant you lose everything, this world and the next, because you will never have the opportunity to live. This is the one thing that Hashem can never give us, and that we simply have to take for ourselves – the desire to live and to be aware and therefore everything depends on a person's circumstances. We desire a perfect world because it is the only chance we have to achieve anything. We desire the Messianic Era because we want the opportunity to develop our minds, and to strive towards perfection. The deepest drive a person can have is to be the person that lives fully in both worlds.

Chapter Ten

In which we conclude *Hilchot Teshuva* with the teaching that one should observe the Torah for no other motive other than because it is the Truth, and discover an obligation to learn as much as we can about nature in order that we should love the Creator.

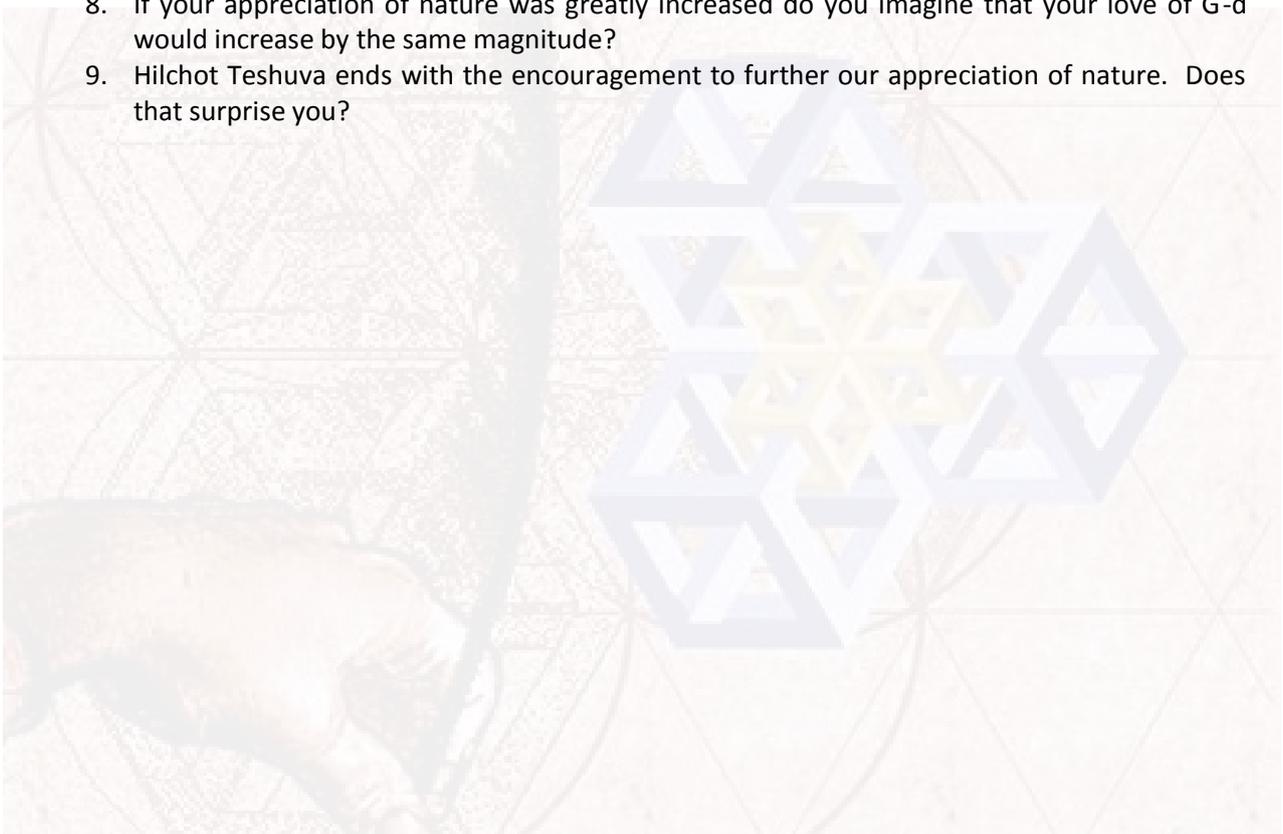
SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

The theme of chapter ten is one's motivation for being religious, and is a lesson in how to love!

- 10.1. A person should not say that they will observe the Torah to merit its rewards, or to avoid its punishments.
- 10.2. Rather one should observe the Torah purely because it is true, and should do so with love.
- 10.3. How much love does one need to serve G-d? A person should love God with an immense love that binds his soul up in the love of God. Thus, he will always be obsessed with this love as if he is lovesick.
- 10.4. One should therefore not be concerned for the consequences of ones service of G-d, rather one should simply perform it because it is the true thing to do.
- 10.5. It is permissible to learn Torah for ulterior motives, because over time they will come to learn it for the correct motivation.
- 10.6. The amount that one loves G-d is in direct proportion to the amount that one knows G-d. It is fitting for one to seclude themselves to gain wisdom in order to appreciate the beauty and wonder of the world, and it's Creator.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER – CHAPTER TEN

1. The text says *“A person should not say that they will observe the Torah to merit its rewards, or to avoid its punishments.”* “A person should not say” – this implies that saying this to oneself is itself wrong. Why is articulation relevant to advice regarding motivation?
2. Do you agree that 99% of all religious activity is ultimately based on ulterior motives?
3. Can you put into words what that target level of pure motivation is?
4. The text (10,3) asks: *“How much love does one need to serve G-d?”* Why has love (or lust) been such an ongoing analogy to the love of G-d through this book?
5. Have you experienced being lovesick?
6. How does 10.3 relate to 10.1? Isn't being lovesick ultimately a selfish emotion?
7. The text (10,6) says: *“The amount that one loves G-d is in direct proportion to the amount that one knows G-d. It is fitting for one to seclude themselves to gain wisdom in order to appreciate the beauty and wonder of the world, and it's Creator.”* Is our love of our friends and family also directly proportionate to our knowledge of them?
8. If your appreciation of nature was greatly increased do you imagine that your love of G-d would increase by the same magnitude?
9. Hilchot Teshuva ends with the encouragement to further our appreciation of nature. Does that surprise you?



FULL TEXT – CHAPTER TEN

- 10.1 A person should not say: "I will fulfill the mitzvot of the Torah and occupy myself in its wisdom in order to receive all the blessings which are contained within it or in order to merit the life of the world to come."

"[Similarly,] I will separate myself from all the sins which the Torah warned against so that I will be saved from all the curses contained in the Torah or so that [my soul] will not be cut off from the life of the world to come."

It is not fitting to serve God in this manner. A person whose service is motivated by these factors is considered one who serves out of fear. He is not on the level of the prophets or of the wise.

The only ones who serve, God in this manner are common people, women, and minors. They are trained to serve God out of fear until their knowledge increases and they serve out of love.

- 10.2 One who serves [God] out of love occupies himself in the Torah and the mitzvot and walks in the paths of wisdom for no ulterior motive: not because of fear that evil will occur, nor in order to acquire benefit. Rather, he does what is true because it is true, and ultimately, good will come because of it.

This is a very high level which is not merited by every wise man. It is the level of our Patriarch, Abraham, whom God described as, "he who loved Me," for his service was only motivated by love.

God commanded us [to seek] this rung [of service] as conveyed by Moses as [Deuteronomy 6:5] states: "Love God, your Lord." When a man will love God in the proper manner, he will immediately perform all of the mitzvot motivated by love.

- 10.3 What is the proper [degree] of love? That a person should love God with a very great and exceeding love until his soul is bound up in the love of God. Thus, he will always be obsessed with this love as if he is lovesick.

[A lovesick person's] thoughts are never diverted from the love of that woman. He is always obsessed with her; when he sits down, when he gets up, when he eats and drinks. With an even greater [love], the love for God should be [implanted] in the hearts of those who love Him and are obsessed with Him at all times as we are commanded [Deuteronomy 6:5: "Love God...] with all your heart and with all soul."

This concept was implied by Solomon [Song of Songs 2:5] when he stated, as a metaphor: "I am lovesick." [Indeed,] the totality of the Song of Songs is a parable describing [this love].

- 10.4 The Sages of the previous generations declared: Should one say: "I will study Torah in order that I become wealthy, in order that I be called a Rabbi, or in' order that I receive reward in the world to come?" The Torah teaches [Deuteronomy 11:13]: "[If you are careful to observe My commandments...] to love God; [implying] that all that you do should only be done out of love.

The Sages also said: [Psalms 112:1 instructs:] "Desire His commandments greatly." [Desire His commandments] and not the reward [which comes from] His commandments.

In a similar manner, the great Sages would command the more understanding and brilliant among their students in private: "'Do not be like servants who serve their master [for the sake of receiving a reward].' Rather, since He is the Master, it is fitting to serve Him;" i.e., serve [Him] out of love.

- 10.5 Anyone who occupies himself with the Torah in order to receive reward or in order to protect himself from retribution is considered as one who is not occupied for the God's sake. [In contrast,] anyone who occupies himself with it, not because of fear, nor to receive a reward, but rather because of his love for the Lord of the entire earth who commanded it, is one who occupies himself for God's sake.

Nevertheless, our Sages declared: A person should always occupy himself with the Torah even when it is not for God's sake for out of [service which is not intended] for God's sake will come service that is intended for God's sake.

Therefore, when one teaches children, women, and most of the common people, one should teach them to serve out of fear and in order to receive a reward. As their knowledge grows and their wisdom increases, this secret should be revealed to them [slowly,] bit by bit. They should become accustomed to this concept gradually until they grasp it and know it and begin serving [God] out of love.

- 10.6 It is a well-known and clear matter that the love of God will not become attached within a person's heart until he becomes obsessed with it at all times as is fitting, leaving all things in the world except for this. This was implied by the command [Deuteronomy 6:5: "Love God, your Lord,] with all your heart and all your soul.

One can only love God [as an outgrowth] of the knowledge with which he knows Him. The nature of one's love depends on the nature of one's knowledge! A small [amount of knowledge arouses] a lesser love. A greater amount of knowledge arouses a greater love. Therefore, it is necessary for a person to seclude himself in order to understand and conceive wisdom and concepts which make his creator known to him according to the potential which man possesses to understand and comprehend as we explained in Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah.

Blessed be God who grants assistance. This concludes the first book, the Book of Knowledge, with the help of the Almighty. The amount of chapters in this book are 46:

Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah - 10 chapters.

Hilchot De'ot - 7 chapters.

Hilchot Talmud Torah - 7 chapters.

Hilchot Avodat Kochavim - 12 chapters.

Hilchot Teshuvah - 10 chapters.

TRANSCRIPTION OF SHIUR BY RAV MATIS WEINBERG SHLITA – CHAPTER TEN

The tenth chapter comes to make sure that we do not fall into a mistaken understanding of chapters eight and nine, which dealt with reward and the nature of *Olam HaBah*. The only point of the past chapters is that we should be able to recognise that when we are talking about the concept of Divine Service, achievement and the nature of *teshuva* we are discussing something that you experience existentially. The question in our minds as to whether we merit *Olam HaBah* or not is totally irrelevant. One needs to respond to one's life on the level of being, not on the level of being concerned about any particular worry or lack.

Torah is something that we should be passionate about because it defines reality, and we just want to be. We don't want to get anything out of it, neither fame, money or *Olam HaBah*, otherwise life is essentially reduced to a level of prostitution where G-d needs to pay us in parts of *Olam HaBah* for getting us to do what He wants in *Olam HaZeh*. The more refined ones motivations the more of a high class prostitute one is, whereas one who is focused and recognises reality is a human being. The deepest love that can exist is ones love of existence. All of the strategies for getting G-d to love us are all childish tools. This is the most passionate drive that can be. The universe itself is an expression of the want to be.

The incredible universe we live in is always bringing out more and more complex forms of what it means to be, and there is no standing still – one either fully identifies with the universe or one is an idiot. This is what it means to be Avraham, to continue being him and to really know Torah. The only contact that we have with reality is the contact with passion. If there is anything else that matters to you then you are mad. One needs to be focused on passion, on a desperate desire simply to be, because that is who one truly is. To the extent to which mad other things are part of our agenda is the extent to which we can never do *teshuva*, because to where will one repent? One who is petty, limited, selfish, ugly will never be able to see more than that, and therefore will never ever be able to do *teshuva*.

All of the things that we achieve and know are simply elements of knowing G-d, and are therefore expressions of love. At the beginning of Sefer HaMada⁶ I told you that the way to know about loving G-d is to study nature, and to understand how this world works. One needs to be aware of what happens around us. Did we think that this was a trick where this knowledge stirred us to?! What it is all about is that the knowledge and awareness that you have IS the love, it's not the path to the love. Love is immeasurably dependant on our awareness. Love is the breadth of awareness that we have. To the extent to which there is anything about nature that the guy next to you knows that you don't know, by definition he loves G-d more than you. An existential state is not being simple and escaping – it is being aware of the complexity of the world, the deeper your love, and the more powerful is the need to act, the more immediate is the moment, the demanding is your responsiveness to the moment.

Our need to be is our deepest need to get away from anything that will take us away from a state of being into a state of going to something. The space of *teshuva* is to be in a space of love. To be capable of coming back requires a profound awareness and knowledge of what you are and who you are? And the deepest expression of who you are is that you are everything. To the extent a person is connected to G-d one is connected to the world. You will simply not let anything come in the way of this, and you will be always in a state of

⁶ The Rambam's Mishna Torah is divided into 14 books, the first of which is called Sefer HaMada, the Book of Knowledge. Hilchot Teshuva is the fifth and final part of Sefer HaMada.

passionate love. And in the same way that there are emotional states of love which seem to go beyond emotion (which are sometimes here, sometimes gone) but we do sometimes find people who are so lovesick that they cannot do anything without thinking about the other person. The power of simple love is so awesome – can you imagine how much more powerful is the love of being. Can you imagine how laughable it is to let other concerns impact on this. As a person makes this their goal, discovering themselves and discovering G-d within us, they do *teshuva*. To the extent that we are motivated by other things we are going through the motions like an emotional, philosophical animal. Never justify it. It may be that we are low class prostitutes, but we must never justify this. We must at least dream of attaining a higher level. That's why he says 'don't say to yourself that this is who you are' – this may unfortunately be where you are at, but this is not where you will always be. One must passionately pursue one's studies of science and further one's knowledge of nature and one can never say 'who cares about maths, or biology' - that is insane as it means that one is unconcerned for oneself.

The next book therefore is the book of love.

