SHABBOS SHUVA DROSHA 1980

The Rambam teaches us that the scapegoat that was sent out on Yom Kippur forgave the people of their sins. If they did Shuva they were forgiven for all their sins. If they did not do Shuva they were forgiven for only those sins which did not carry with it the death penalty or Koreis, or excision. Why should this be so? The Rambam actually uses the word strict sins and easy sins. This contradicts what he says in other places where he said every time you violate a negative commandment it is a strict sin and our deserving of Malkas and the others are an easy sin. Here he says that strict sins are only the sins of the death penalty or excision. What's more, the whole concept that the Rambam mentions here does not make any sense because in Judaism we have always taught that you said repentance before you are forgiven for any sin. How can the scapegoat forgive anybody's sins without repentance? If we look carefully at the prayers of Yom Kippur we will see that Yom Kippur does two things. It forgives the sins of the people of Israel and it removes our sins. We are individuals and we are also members of the House of Israel. As individuals when we sin we must first repent before we can be forgiven. The House of Israel is a separate entity. The scapegoat and the goat brought on the altar are symbols of the collective Israel. We have a Kedusha, or a spark of holiness, because we are individuals and we have another Kedusha because we belong to the people of Israel. How do we achieve renewal of our Kedusha, of being a member of Israel? By being attached to it more fully. When we come to Shul on Yom Kippur we are stating that we still belong to the Jewish people and we want to further its purposes. We are, in effect, getting forgiveness for our lapses as a member of the Kedushas Israel by just coming to Shul. By giving charity on Yom Kippur it is enough to say that we are proud to be Jews and we want to strengthen our bond to our faith. However, as our Kedusha as individuals this is not enough. For the sins we commit as individuals we have to be pure. We have to repent. The reason the Rambam says that the scapegoat ceremony forgave all sins

except those punishable by death or excision was that he was talking about our sins which concern our being attached to Israel, our Kedushas Israel. When we incur the death penalty or excision which means being cut off from Israel we no longer share in this Kedusha, and, therefore, since we have cut ourselves off from our people the rituals of our people no longer bind us. However, as individuals with individual sins we are not forgiven. We must feel we are pure. We must repent. Community services are not sufficient. Yom Kippur will also forgive us from these sins if we repent. There are two types of repentance, repentance which springs from the past. Many times we commit a sin and are so disgusted with ourselves, although many times we transfer this disgust onto others, that we would never want to repeat this sin. We feel disgusted with ourselves and we want to become pure. G-d has assured us that He "ill forgive us if we really mean what we say. There are three steps in obtaining forgiveness; regret for the past, recognition that we have sinned, and a desire not to repeat it in the future. Sometimes they do not all happen at the same time. We have just discussed a case where there is regret for the past. This happens when a person is filled with overwhelming disgust for what he does, but sometimes a person does not even know that he has sinned. That's why we must look carefully at others. Sometimes we cannot recognize that we have done the wrong thing until we see it has affected others. Sometimes recognition of sin comes way before regret. On Yom Kippur it is enough to come to Shul and give a donation to maintain our place as a member of the Jewish people. It is not, though, enough to become pure and free from sin. This requires repentance. Jews who come to Shul are to be commended but they have not done the whole job until they severely investigate and look at themselves and determine not to repeat their sins ever again.