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If we look in the Rambam's laws of teshuva we will see that there seems to be several contradictions. In the very first paragraph of the very first chapter the Rambam says that any mitzvahs of the Torah, whether positive or negative, if a person violates one of them, whether on purpose or by mistake, and when he will do teshuva he has to return from sin and he returns from his sin he is obligated to confess before G-d. In fact, he goes on to say that you are not forgiven unless you will do teshuva, and he lists all the different types of punishments and sacrifices that a person has to bring in order to be atoned for his sins. But then in the second paragraph when the Rambam talks about the scapegoat he says that the goat that is sent out into the wilderness because it is a kapor for all Israel, the Kohen Godol confesses upon it for all Israel and the scapegoat forgives all the sins of the Torah, the ones that are easy and hard, whether he did it on purpose or by accident, whether he knew about it or did not know about it. Everything is forgiven by the scapegoat, and that is if a person does teshuva. If a person does not do teshuva the scapegoat will not forgive him except on the easy sins, and what are the easy sins and the hard sins? The hard sins are the ones that you are liable for them by death by the court or by excision. Excision means punishment by the heavenly court. In fact, almost all ritual offenses basically are only punishable by the heavenly court and not by the earthly court, and even then the Jewish judicial procedure is so stringent that it is almost impossible to convict anybody. If the court would convict anybody of the death penalty once every 70 years, or some say once every 7 years, that court would be called a bloody court. In the case of OJ Simpson according to Jewish law he would be free immediately. There are not witnesses. It is all circumstancial evidence. In Judaism ignorance is an excuse so, therefore, you have to be warned even before you do the offense and so, therefore, you have to have these same two witnesses, one who saw you do the act, so, therefore OJ Simpson would have been free a long time ago if his trial would be held according to Jewish judicial procedure. The main purpose

for listing what the punishments for offenses are is to prioritorize different offenses so we know which are more severe and which are not, and, of course, the main way which Judaism has always enforced its laws is not so much through punishment but through education. When a person received a Torah education he received a values education. He was taught to want to do what he ought to do. In fact, if a person would not do something that was right he could not stand it himself. He was not a mentsch. All a person would have to say sometimes was that was not the way a mentsch acts. How can you act at such a low level when you a person of human dignity, a partner with G-d in creation? So here we see that in the second paragraph of the Rambam that teshuva is not necessary when we are talking about easy sins. What does he mean by easy sins? He means all those sins that you do not get the death penalty from the earthly court or excision, which can mean either early death or children dying before their bar mitzvah or whatever it is before death, for these sins you needed to do teshuva before the scapegoat could atone. Of course, the scapegoat was one of two goats. Two goats were taken who were identical and a lot was drawn to determine which goat would be sent out into the wilderness and which goat would be offered on the altar. We know that this was a very important part of the Temple ceremony. One of the reasons why it was so important was to remind G-d that many times the reason why a person acts rightly or wrongly is not so much because he has a good moral character or not, but because he has never been tested. That was the claim that Satan had against Job. Satan, of course, works for G-d. He is G-d's prosecuting attorney and he just brings the accusations against men to G-d. We see that many times the reason why a person acted well in life was because he never really had big challenges. It is very difficult to judge people who have been in concentration camps and became kappos. We were not there and we do not know how we would have acted in that terrible situation. Many times people were not put in a position where they were tempted. The rabbis say that man can resist everything except

for temptation. Sometimes you are thrown in temptation's way. You do not look for it. Therefore, whether we are good or bad sometimes is really a matter of luck, a matter of the luck of the draw. That is what the goats represent. Two people, one was sent out into the desert where it was difficult to lead a good life, and the other was kept in the Temple precinct where it was possible to lead a good life. That person followed the godly and dedicated life while the other one roamed free. At first glance, it seems that the one who roamed free should have a happier life, but Judaism says no. The evitable result is to be chased off a cliff, is to die a death of no meaning whatsoever, is to be alienated from yourself and your surroundings and from G-d. That is a terrible, terrible punishment.

In America, unfortunately, today many people think that the good life is the life in which you have no responsibility so you can roam free like a cowboy, but that is not the Jewish perception of the good life. That's why the rabbis say also that in a place that a Baal Teshuva stands, a righteous man, a man who never sins, cannot stand. In other words, that the Baal Teshuva is at a higher level. He is a person who has returned after being tested by all sorts of temptations and maybe even succumbing to one or two of them but bringing himself back and renewing himself so that he can withstand these temptations stands on a higher level than a person who never was tempted at all.

But we now return to our question. Why in the very first paragraph the Rambam said that teshuva is necessary for every offense, on purpose, by accident, positivae, negative, every offense needs teshuva, while in the second paragaph the Rambam seems to imply that you do not need teshuva if you have just done an offense which does not really require punishment by death by the human or excision by the heavenly court. If we look carefully at this we will see that the answer is found in the siddur. We know that we say a special Shmone Esre for every holiday. Actually the word Shmone Esre is not really appropriate here. Shmone Esre means the 18

benedictions. Actually there have been 19 benedictions ever since the time after the destruction of the second Temple. It was then that the 19th was added against the informers because for many years Christian Jews were just considered regular Jews, and those who converted to Christianity were considered Jews because originally they would have been required to be circumcized and go to the mikvah, etc. but later on they were not. Many of them turned against the Jewish people and they informed to the Romans. Of course, there were other Jews who did the same thing who were not Christians and this caused the Jewish people a lot of trouble. The reason why Judaism and Christianity really split was really for two reasons. One is that the Christians never supported the Jewish revolts. They divorced themselves from the Jewish people. In the first revolt they went to Petra. In the second revolt of Bar Kochba, which happened in the year 135, they actually took an active part against the Jewish people and informed on them to the Roman authorities, so at the beginning the rabbis just considered the Christian Jews a Jewish sect, maybe a radical sect, but still Jews, while after a while they considered them just gentiles and did not consider them at all a part of the Jewish people. That was because they did not support the Jewish people in their troubles, and the second reason was, who was a Jew? They dropped circumcision and many of them dropped the immersion in the mikvah completely the way we do it and instead substituted just a few drops of water. Therefore, these people were not considered Jews because they were never converted, and since the majority of Christians later came from non-Jewish stock, therefore, they were no longer even considered Jews. When we look at the Jewish people we will see that the Jewish people are treated as a corporate entity, as a corporate entity called Knesset Yisroel, which is greater than the sum of the individual Jews. If you have individual Jews who get together and who bring a Korban, a sacrifice, they are all partners and do not have to lay their hands on the sacrifice, but this does not apply to the sacrifices of corporate Israel. Those sacrifices that were brought from the Leeshta, and

you know they used to collect money once a year to bring the Tameem, the daily sacrifices, the morning and afternoon sacrifices. There was no Maariv, no evening sacrifice in the Temple, and this was from the money that was collected from all the Jewish people, half a shekel from every Jew, so we see that this was the representing of the whole Jewish people and when the Jewish people would bring this sacrifice they would all be forgiven as a corporate entity and this was, too, applied to this scapegoat as well. This scapegoat represented the total Jewish community and that the person was forgiven for his sins if he did not do teshuva because he was part of the entire Jewish people. However, if a person was guilty of a death penalty offense or of excision, then that personw as excluded from the Jewish people. That is why we say that if a person does not fast on Yom Kippur and does not keep Pesach, that person gets excision because it is true that within the next generation his children will no longer be Jews. They will not associate with the Jewish triumphs or Jewish sorrow. They will not identify with Yom Kippur, which is a day of forgiveness of the Jewish people for worshipping the golden calf. They will not identify with the Jewish people in the exodus from Egypt by eating no chometz on Pesach, so, therefore, since they, themselves, have taken themselves out from the Jewish people therefore they are not forgiven for their sins when it comes to their position as a member of the Jewish people. As you see, there are really two types of sins. There are sins that we do as individuals and sins we do as a Jew. Every Jew has two kedushas, two sanctifications, two aspects of connection to G-d. The first is the first covenant which G-d made with everyone, with Noah. Everyone is under a covenantal relationship with G-d, and there we have the kedusha of a human being. Every human being is sacred in the eyes of Hashem and we cannot kill or denigrate any human being. We all have a covenantal relationship with G-d. Then we also have a second kedusha which comes from Avraham Oveinu and from Mount Sinai as a Jew, and that means that we are part of a people who are supposed to bring G-d's message to the world. Now

the scapegoat forgives only those sins as we are as a Jew, but not those sins which we do as an individual. It is possible to be a good individual but to be a bad Jew. For example, those individuals who give a lot of charity to every non-Jewish cause but they do not give any charity to Jewish causes. We know many families in the United States who do that way. They do not give a penny to Jewish causes but give to gentile causes. These people have destroyed their link to the Jewish people, and, therefore, as a member of the Jewish people they no longer can be forgiven for those sins that they have done against the people.

That is what we read about, too, in the siddur when we say, "G-d forgives and atone for our sins and the sins of all the house of Israel." We sin twice. We sin as an individual and we sin as a Jew. Of course, in some offenses we do both simultaneously. Later on we also say that G-d should remove our guilt. Ashom in Hebrew also means destruction. That refers to us as individuals because the Jewish people have been promised that they will be eternal. There is no promise that the Jews in America will be eternal or that certain Jewish families will be eternal. It is only promised that the Jewish people will be eternal. So it is possible that different branches of the Jewish people could become extinct, will be locked off from the Jewish people, but the Jewish people, itself, will remain intact. So that this second paragraph does not actually contradict the first paragraph because it is talking about something entirely different. It is talking about our kedusha as a member of the Jewish people. That's why the Rambam here makes a distinction between hard sins and easy sins which is different than he normally makes, because normally he makes that a hard sin is anytime a person is liable for stripes, but here a hard sin is just those sins which exclude a person from the Jewish people. When a person takes himself out from the Jewish people, then that person no longer can be forgiven for his sins as a Jew by just celebrating Yom Kippur. Now when the Jews flock to the shul on Yom Kippur what they are doing is reattaching themselves to the Jewish people, and when they reattach themselves to the Jewish people then they are forgiven for their sins.

That's what Rabbi says also, that the day of Yom Kippur, itself, forgives. Now, how could Rabbi say that the day of Yom Kippur, itself, forgives? He, too, is talking about the fact that you are forgiven as a Jew. Therefore, the exceptions to this are if a person does not keep bris milah, if a person finds all sorts of heretical interpretations in the Torah which do not fit at all to the text or the traditional interpretation, for example, that Moses was not a Jew but an Egyptian and the exodus never occurred and all these kinds of things, that that person has taken himself out fromt he Jewish people, and by taking himself out from the Jewish people then the day of Yom Kippur, itself, does not forgive him as an individual.

However, we also find in the Rambam that there is another contradiction. We find that there is a contradiction when he speaks about in the fourth paragraph the fact that even though teshuva forgives on everything and the essence of YOm Kippur forgives there are some sins that are forgiven in their time and there are some sins that are not forgiven except only after a time. How is that? If a person violates a positive commandment that does not have excision and he does teshuva he is immediately forgiven for his sins because that is what it says, "Turn my wayward children and I will cure you from your backsliding." It is interesting to note that the word here is cure because Judaism looks on sin as a cancer which invades a person's soul. We all know that each of us has a piece of G-d in us, and that piece of G-d in us is our soul. When we do not act in the proper way we alienate ourselves from our own soul. We never lose our soul and we can always harken to the cry of the soul, but it is many times very difficult to hear the cry if we keep adding one sin after another. G-d is always there calling us to return. That, of course, is the pangs of our conscience, and just like a cancer will not go away if we just pretend that it does not exist so, therefore, if we pretend that our sins do not exist they will not go away. They will just get worse and worse. It is just like how people today do not want to be made to feel guilty about the things they should feel guilty for so they will pay thousands of dollars to go to this therapist and that psychiatrist

to make sure that they are told that they should not feel guilty for things that they should feel guilty for. That, of course, will not help them one bit because just as an illness has to be recognized before it can be cured, so a person has to face up to his delinquincies. Of course, usually the smarter the person the harder it is for him to face up to his errors because he can always rationalize what he has done. He will say it is not his fault that this happened, but it is because this person or that person, or if he is in business he can say it is not his fault the business failed but because this banker or that supplier did bad, when, of course, the truth of the matter is that he probably made some very bad business decisions also. The worst possible thing that a person can do is to lie to himself. The reason why is is so bad is not so much he is telling lies to others, which is bad enough, but because he ends up by believing his lies, and when a person ends up oelieving his lies then a person is lost because then a person can never correct his own deficiencies and, what's more, he will live in a never never land and never be connected really to reality. He will be alienated from his environment, and alienation is one of the worst possible consequences of sin. That is, of couse, what happened to Adam and Eve. When Adam sinned he and Eve hid. They became alienated from G-d and Adam almost became alienated from Eve, too, because when G-d confronted him with his sin, what did he say? He said, "It is Your fault, G-d, because of the woman that You gave me. It is her fault." In other words, he blamed his wife for his own errors and, therefore, he almost lost her. Of course, she did not take responsibility either. She blamed the serpent and that, of course, is what caused her also to become alienated from her husband. Therefore, it says in the Torah that Adam turned again to his wife and his wife turned to him and they became reconciled but only after they eventually admitted their sin. The rabbis say that actually Cain was on a higher level than Adam because Cain really recognized his sin in the very beginning. He said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" but at the end afterwards he said, "My sin is too great to bear." Therefore, G-d did him a great kindness.

The rabbis ask what was the kindness? He gave him the mark of Cain. The makr of Cain in Jewish life is a blessing, not a curse. Therefore, everybody who would see Cain would recognize that G-d is a forgiving and kind G-d and we can come back from the doing of terrible things that we have done and we can still lead a just life. Of course, Cain could always claim, "I did not even know I could kill my brother." No one had ever been killed before, but he admitted his sin. He did not try to look for excuses and, therefore, he received the mark of Cain, which in this instance meant that it was a blessing. So sin is a cancer in us. It can destroy and overcome us. Therefore, we need to be cured from it. It comes on us many times like an illness does, too. Sometimes it comes suddenly and then we fail to recognize it and then it gets deeper and deeper and worse and worse.

We also learn here as we continue that there are some sins that if a person violates a negative commandment that does not have excision or the death penalty by the hand of man and a person does teshuva that teshuva hangs until Yom Kippur and then with Yom Kippur and teshuva a person is forgiven. Also, there are other sins that, for example, if you violate excision or death by the hand of the beis din and you do teshuva, well teshuva and Yom Kippur causes the sins to hang but the different punishments and pains that come upon a person will cause him to get complete atonement. Rabbi Soleveitchik talks about that. He says that for certain people they would be very minor but they are awakenings to the fact that a person did sin. Then there are some that only the death of the person can cause his complete atonement and there are if a person desecrates G-d's name even if he did teshuva and Yom Kippur came and he did teshuva and had pains come upon him he is not forgiven until his own death. Now this is very difficult this paragraph because later on in chapter 7 of the Rambam we learn how teshuva has an immediate effect. It never says that it hangs. It says that if a person does teshuva, he says last night you were hated before G-d, you were detested and far and disgusting but today you are loved and beautiful and are close and are considered a friend of G-d, so before you were not

My people and now you are My people and so forth, so how is it possible that the Rambam says here that teshuva hangs and over there he talks about the fact that teshuva is immediate? Last night you were a sinner and today you are completely beloved by G-d. Of course, the answer could be is that there are two different kinds of teshuva. There is teshuva from love and teshuva from fear. That is what we learn about Resh Lokesh, that Resh Lokesh said that if a person does teshuva he changes his sins into accidental sins. Then a few sentences later he says that if a person does teshuva he changes his sins to merits. How is that possible that Rosh Lokesh could say these two different things in just the space of a few sentences? Of course, the answer is that he is talking about two different kinds of teshuva. There is one kind of teshuva that a person does out of calculation. His conscience is gnawing him at him and bothering him so, therefore, he decides he is not going to do it anymore, but it is not really out of the heartfelt deep conviction. It is more or less a convenience that he does it. For example, in the second chapter we learn how if a person does a sin and he does not do this sin again when he has an opportunity to do it, therefore, it is considered to be a complete teshuva, but it also could be a teshuva just from fear, from calculation. It gives the example of a person in an adulterous relationship with a woman and then later on he is in the same spot and he also had the opportunity to do it again but he did not even though he had full bodily faculties and even though he was not afraid he would be caught but he says even if he did not do it because of physical affirmity or old age or fear of being caught, it would still be considered teshuva only not as good a teshuva, but these teshuvas that they are talking about here is teshuva that is based upon calculation, it is not good for business, it is bad for his reputation, he would hurt him vis a vis his wife and children, for society it is not something that should be done, but he did not really have a deep conviction that a mentsch does not do things like that. For example, I once talked to a person from the Mafia who had gradually built up a legitimate business and completely severed all his

Mafia ties and for 20 years he had been a respectable businessman. I asked him if he lost his money would he ever go back to the Mafia? He said, of course. I asked why since for 20 years he had been a honest man. He said, "I was and I will continue to be but I cannot live without money. If I can't make money honestly then I'll have to do it a different way." So he was a Baal Teshuva for 20 years. He had not done anything wrong and did not intend to do anything wrong, but if he would lose all his money and he could not live without money his was an act of calculation This is many times we find, too, that when people do teshuva they do teshuva for different reasons. They do not do teshuva necessarily because this is a heartfelt urge that overcomes them. That is the teshuva Me'era, but the teshuva Me'Ava is a teshuva from a complete reorientation of a person's whole character, that from now on he considers himself to be almost a different person, that those things that he did in the past that were directed toward evil pursuits and self-destructive pursuits he is now willing to use for positive pursuits. Of course, it is a known psychological fact that negative emotions are usually much stronger than positive emotions. If you like someone and you are a friend, someone you usually do not go out of your way to do a favor, if they ask for a favor you will do it and so forth, but if you hate somebody many times you go out of your way to hurt them. You call the bank and say don't give them a loan. You speak Loshan Hora about them. You do bad things to him, so the negative emotions are many times much stronger than the positive emotions, but if a person recognizes the fact that he now has to live positively many times he can take the whole strength of these negative emotions and apply them to the positive emotions and that can cause him to be a very powerful effect in the community. That's another reason why the rabbis say that if a person is completely righteous he stands in a different place than a person who is always righteous because he is filled with more energy. We see that in yeshivas many times where people come from even drug backgrounds and other backgrounds and they come and with renewed energy and strength and they add a very strong positive element

to Jewish society. We know that that is what we are talking about the teshuva from love. It is a complete reorientatin of a person. He just could not do this bad thing anymore. It just would not fit into his personality. He is really basically a changed person. The other is really mainly a calculated thing of the mind balancing this factor against this factor. I might as well do the right thing instead of the wrong thing. Resh Lokesh knew about all these things because Resh Lokesh came from a difficult background. He was once in yeshiva with Agelhan and then the Romans took him, probably because his family was suspected of being too Jewish and, of course, there was a prohibition against learning after the persecution, and he was a gladiator and from gladiator he became an armed robber and one day he saw Rav Gelkern swimming in the Jordan and he took his clothes and the Rav recognized him and called him back and said, "Come, come with me. Stay in the yeshiva. Remember I have a beautiful sister and you can never tell what will happen." He came with Rav Gelkern and the story goes he said he wanted to be a robber but when he tried to he could not and then he became one of the greatest teachers in Israel and he and Rav Gelkern discussed many of the basic problems in the Talmud and based upon their discussions many Halachas are determined, so Resh Lokesh knew the complete power of a reorientation of a person's personality. Maybe in the beginning teshuva is teshuva Me'era but afterwards it is teshuva Me'Ava, teshuva from love, and the teshuva from love also has the potentiality to redeem a person and the world.

Let us all hope and pray that in the coming year all of us will have the capacity to do teshuva from love, that we will completely change our orientation so that we will not do anything that is beneath us, and that we will be a positive force for good in the world so we can help transform our community and the world so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amne.