SHABBOS SHUVA DROSHA 1988
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We learn in the Rambam in Chilkus Teshuva any mitzvah in the Torah, whether it is a positive or negative commandment, if a person violates any one of these, whether they did it on purpose or by mistake, when he does Teshuva he should repent from his sin and he returns from his sin and is obligated to confess before G-d, Blessed be He, and he shall say because it says in the Torah, "A man or a woman when he will do any of these things...and they shall confess their sins which they did and this is a confession of words." This confession is a positive commandment. And how does a person confess? He says, "Please, G-d, I sinned, I transgressed, I rebelled before You, I did so and so, behold I am sorry, I am shamed in my deeds, and I will never return to do this thing." This is the essence of confession, and anybody who increases the confession and lengthens in this matter is praiseworthy. This is what the Rambam tells us. He tells us that the essence of the Teshuva is confession, that when a person does a sin, that that person must do Teshuva, and he does it by confession. Of course, we all know that three words are used here for "sin". One is "Chatos", which means "I missed the mark, I was insensitive to other people, I did not mean to hurt them but I did, I did not realize that his mother-in-law had just died when I made that snide remark". "Avisu" means "I willfully sinned, but I was overwhelmed by my appetites. I don't think I did the right thing, but the woman was just too beautiful, the treif meat looked too good, the business opportunity, even though it was crooked, was just too tempting. I didn't mean to do it. I don't justify what I did, but I did do it and I did it knowing it was wrong." Finally, we have "Poshati" which means "I rebel, I really didn't like the girl, I really didn't like the treif meat, I really didn't want the business deal, but I just wanted to show that I could do it. I rebel before You." This is like certain Jewish groups used to do 50 and 60 years ago when they would on purpose have a Yom Kippur ball and eat treif food right in front of the synagogue just to show that Yom Kippur had no hold

on them. In all these types of sin, whether missing the mark or your were overwhelmed by your passions or you rebelled on purpose, the same formula applies. You have to say, "I did sin, I admit I sinned, I am not rationalizing, I am not saying that what I did was right", and then you must say you are ashamed for your sin and promise never to do it again. And so the Rambam says that anybody who brings a sin offering or a guilt offering at the time he brings their korban, whether their sacrifice whether it is for a witting sin or an unwitting sin, usually you cannot bring a sacrifice unless you did what you did unwittingly, you are not forgiven until you did Teshuva and you have to confess also with words, that the korban is not a substitute for the confession of words, that you have to also admit that what you did was wrong.

However, there are several difficulties in the Rambam, itself. We all know that when a person does Teshuva it is difficult. Usually we have feelings of unease. The rabbis compare sin to sickness. When you do the wrong thing you do not feel good about it. Our conscience pricks us. We have glimmerings of unease. Finally these glimmerings are concrete ties and thoughts that we probably did not do the right thing. We cannot rationalize this away. Finally, they must be expressed in words. When we do Teshuva we must do it with our whole heart. Certain mitzvah we do not need kavona, intent, in order to do them. There is an argument in the Talmud whether you need intent for mitzvahs, but most rabbis agree you do not need intent. If you picked up the lulav and esrog and shook it, even if you do not have the best intent you fulfilled the mitzvah. If you ate matzah even if you really did not have the full intent to complete the mitzvah, it still counts. If you jump in the mikvah even though you do not have the real intent, it still counts. However, when it comes to prayer, which is the service in the heart, when it comes to doing Teshuva, you have to really mean it. If you say

the words without meaning it is foolish. It does not accomplish the purpose of proving that you are repentant. It is difficult to do Teshuva because you have to come to grips with yourself. You have to really agree that you have done the wrong thing, which is hard for an ego to take. You have to be honest with yourself. Of course, in prayer we also have to be honest with ourselves. We have to also say that we have done what we have done and that there is no justification for what we have done, although the natural condition of man is to always justify everything that he does.

The Rambam, later on in the second chapter of the laws of Teshuva, says that Aveiras, sins, that we have confessed on one Yom Kippur, you must return and confess upon them on another Yom Kippur even though we have still stood in our Teshuva, even though we have not violated these laws anymore. As it says, "Because my rebellion I will know and my sin I will place against me always." How is it possible that we have to confess a sin over again if we have not repeated it? For example, if before last Yom Kippur I sinned and then I repented and I determined never to do it again, and the whole year I have not done it again, why should I have to repeat it on Yom Kippur? Why should I have to give another confession of sins for a sin I have not done for a whole year? It does not seem to make sense, because I do not have to be contrite. Why should I be contrite? I have not done anything wrong. What's more, the Rambam says in the laws of Massah HaKarbonas, of the practicalities of bringing the sacrifices, in chapter three, that when a person confesses on his korban, in other words at the time you bring your sacrifice you have to put your hands on the sacrifice and say, "I sinned, I willfully transgressed, I rebelled, I have done so and so and I have returned in Teshuva before you, and this is my kappora, my atonement." How is it possible that the Rambam has us say this because it does not fit the formula which he gave us before? The formula which he gave us before was that you

say, "I sinned, I am ashamed for what I did, and I will never do it again." In this formulation you say, "I sinned and I have returned in Teshuva before you, and this is my kapora." You don't say anything about being ashamed, and you do not say anything about not doing it again in the future. It is not just one confession. The first confessiont that the Rambam is talking about is the confession that a person has to do even before he brings the korban. This is not the confession that he makes when he puts his hand on the korban. Even before you have the ability to bring the korban, you have to be contrite inside. You have to determine that you are not going to sin anymore. That is the confession when we are doing Teshuva, but the confession that we make when we bring the korban is an altogether different confession. It does not have anything to do with not repeating the sin. That is, of course, why on Yom Kippur we repeat the older sins. Why is it, though, that we should repeat the older sins, and why should we repeat this sin when we come to bring our korban, when we place our hand on the korban? What's more, when the Kohen Godol makes the confession on Yom Kippur and he says, "Please, G-d, they have sinned. They have willingly trangressed. They have rebelled before your people, the House of Israel. Please, G-d, forgive their sins and their trangressions and their rebellion that they have sinned and transgressed and rebelled before You, the people of Israel, as is written in the Torah Moses, Your servant, from the mouth of your glory that this day He will forgive you to purify you from all your sins before G-d." Why should it have to say this? Why does the Kohen Godol say the people have sinned? This cannot be a confession of Teshuva because in it there is no confession here that you are ashamed for what you did and you are not going to do it in the future. Of course, the Kohen Godol could not make such a statement because he is not talking about his own sins here. He is talking about the sins of Israel. How can he say that all Israel is ashamed for what they have done and are not going to do it again? This,

again, is a confession like the confession that a person makes when he bring a korban, a sacrifice. This, too, is similar to when a person has to confess sins that he has not done during the previous year but has done in years before that. What are we talking about here? What is it that we are referring to? Why is it that we have two confessions of sin?

In the Gemora Sanhedrin we learn something very interesting. We learn how Resh Lochesh says, "Great is Teshuva because it makes our willful sins into accidental sins because it says in the Prophet Micah, 'Turn, Israel, to the Lord Your G-d because you have stumbled in your sins'." Here they refer to sins that you have done on purpose as stumbling, and stumbling is by accident. So Rosh Lochesh says here that if you Teshuva even the sins you did on purpose will be considered like accidents. But is that really so? Resh Lochesh also said something else. He says, "Great is Teshuva because your willful sins become merits." How is it possible? Then he quotes a passage from Yecheskel proving it, that when the person turns from his evil and he does righteousness and justice upon him, he will live, that the evil things he did before become positive merits. How can Resh Lochesh say both these things?

It seems to me that what we are talking about here are two different types of Teshuva. The Gemora says that. The Gemora says there is no question one is a Teshuva you do from love and one is a Teshuva that you do from fear. In other words, the Teshuva that you do from fear changes your willful sins into accidental sins, but if you do Teshuva from love, then it changes your willful sins into merits. What do we mean by that? We mean that sometimes when people do Teshuva they can no longer trust themselves, that when they do Teshuva they no longer can live a full life. They must,so to speak, put themselves in a corner. They are afraid of those qualities in life

which made them sin. For example, a person who is very gregarious, who loves people, who likes to joke, who likes to please people, sometimes that could be a downfall, not a positive part of his personality. For example, if that person was so susceptible to peer pressure and loved people so much, he would not be able to turn people down and say no to drugs. He might even help people do things that are evil and bad. How can he say no to the gang when the gang wants to do an illegal act? So, therefore, that person may want to stay away from those aspects of his personality which caused him to sin. Some people really have to do it. Their own personality jeopardizes their keeping on the straight and the narrow. Many times these people find that they cannot live and moral and a decent life unless they suppress part of their personality. They have to wipe away their past. They even have to change their friends, and, of course, we are not talking about evil friends, but they cannot go home anymore to their mother and father because their mother and father may influence them in a path that they do not want to be in. They feel they have to drop all their friends, that they feel that their past has to be a complete blank. That, of course, is what we mean when we say, "G-d, G-d, He will wipe out your sins for my sake and your sins I will not remember anymore." In other words, G-d does sometimes wipe out our sins. "And you shall cast into the depths of the sea all your sin." This is a repentance, a Teshuva, that comes from fear, that a person squelches part of his personality. He is afraid to joke, to talk with people because maybe he will say the wrong thing, do the wrong thing. He is afraid many times to even enter modern society because he is afraid modern society will corrupt him. This is a form of Teshuva, but this is not the highest form of Teshuva. The highest form of Teshuva is a Teshuva from love, when a person knows that those qualities that before led him into sin will now lead him to the heights of righteousness. Therefore,

it say, "And I will wipe out like a cloud your sins and like a thick cloud your trangressions." What does that mean? Just like when a cloud is dispelled it releases energy, it releases water and fertilizes the land, this time G-d is wiping them out not so that they end up to be completely nothing, but that the energies that a person had before to do evil a person should now be able to use for good, that the same person who was good with kids with a salesman's personality and enthusiasm who was before selling dope, should now use his character traits in order to spread Torah, to work with the youth, to be a living emissary of the good and the right, to work for good causes, to use his salesmen techniques in order to promote Judaism. The same thing is true about a person who was good at business but he cheated people. He had a swindling kind of person. People trusted him and he misplaced that trust. That person should now use all those qualities that he had before of raising money and convincing people to give money to raise tzedakah, to raise charity, to help the poor and the helpless. That, of course, is what we are talking about in the two different types of confession.

The first confession that we are talking about is the confession that you do after you sin but before you have done Teshuva where you have to recognize your sin. You have to be ashamed of what you have done, and you have to determine that from now on you are never going to do it again. That is obligatory before you bring a korban, and that, of course, is obligatory before you are forgiven on Yom Kippur or before you are forgiven anytime you turn to G-d. That is obligatory. That is the first confession that the Rambam is talking about. There is another type of confession, and this is the confession when they used to bring the korban. That confession is, "G-d, this is my sin, and I have already returned to Teshuva before You, and this should be my kapora." We all know that when a person brings a korban, that the korban really stands in his stead, that the korban, so

to speak, represents man, that man is now saying, "I am offering all of me to You, G-d, that G-d, I should not compartamentalize and say I will be good on Shabbos but I will not be good on other days." It also stands for the whole man's personality, that when we now come before G-d we should be able to say, "G-d, I am giving you all my talents, all my good traits, and I hope I can use them for good. I hope that the talents I have will not be used for evil, talents that I used before to swindle and hurt people and manipulate people, I am now going to use for good. I before may have had the capacity to convince people about all sorts of schemes knowing that really they were not true, now maybe I will be able to use my same talents to convince people to do things that are right and honest and just. G-d, I am giving you all my talents. I am not going to do Teshuva just from fear but I am going to do Teshuva from love." That is, of course, why the Rambam says, based upon the Talmud of course, that "the place where a Baal Teshuva stands people who have always been righteous are not able to stand there." In other words, the high level that is reached by a Baal Teshuva, by one who does Teshuva, is higher than one who has never sinned before. Of course, in practical terms, this does not exist because all of us have sinned, but the point here is that a person who has done a sin before, who has let his passions run wild and done things that he should not have done, if he can now harness this energy and harness this passion and do good with it, then he will truly be at a very high level. That is, of course, what we all know. We all know that when we sin we alienate ourselves from G-d, although G-d never forsakes us. We know that we have tarnished our soul, but we know that we can never completely soil it. That is why we say, "Last night I was hated before G-d. I was destested, I was foul, I was alienated, I was disgusting, but now I am loved, I am close, I am a friend, I am beloved of G-d." That, of course, is the power of Teshuva: to bring us close to

G-d. On the second confession we ask G-d to let us bring all our selves before G-d, that we want to not have to use any of our personality, that all of our personality should be brought before G-d. We ask Him not only to wipe out our sin, but to lift up our sin because that is a higher form. G-d, we know, has promised us that He is there for us even after we have sinned. That is why we say, "G-d, G-d, merciful and gracious." We say G-d twice to teach us that G-d is there before we sin and after we sin. It is harder to reach Him after we have sinned, but He is always there and we can always find Him. When we do Teshuva we come close to Him, and we once more feel connected to him and to others and to ourselves. But we ask G-d even further, and that is what the Kohen Godol asks on Yom Kippur, that we should feel pure because on this day he will cover upon you, your sins will be covered, to purify you. We want not all those character traits which led us to sin just to be destroyed, we want them to be elevated, to lift up our sin, to be purified so that we should use them for good and right and just goals. May we all during the coming year do Teshuva not only from fear but also from love. May G-d give us the opportunity not only to stay on the straight and narrow but to use all our talents, all our good character traits, all our character traits for good, for right, and for just goals so that truly we will be worthy of a Shana Tova, a good and sweet year.