

(Note: This summary is based on the Rav's 1971 Teshuva Lecture. The adaptation to Joseph and his brothers is mine.)

Rambam (הלכות תשובה, Chapters 1,2) describes the process of the Mitzvah of Repentance and admission of error, תשובה and ויידוי. In chapter 1 the process is:

- Express the sin
- Express remorse
- Express embarrassment
- Express a commitment never to act again in this way

In chapter 2 the process is:

- Relinquishing the sin
- Remove it from his mind and thoughts
- Resolve not to return to the sin
- Verbally acknowledge his sin
- Verbally express his regret and resolve mentioned above

Why does the Rambam appear to have two different processes for repentance? Why does he mention the idea of embarrassment in Chapter 1 but omits it in Chapter 2? What is the connection between תשובה and ויידוי? Are they concurrent or is one a pre-requisite for the other? If תשובה is consistent, why does he repeat the definition or process in each of the first 2 chapters?

Rambam (Chapter1, Halacha 1) says when one repents he must admit his sins (ויידוי). It would appear from this statement that the actual Mitzva is the ויידוי. The Rav explained, based on the Rambam's summary preamble to הלכות תשובה, that the Mitzva is to do תשובה while the manifest act associated with תשובה is ויידוי. Similar to קריאת שמע, where the manifest act is the recitation of the 3 chapters of שמע however the fulfillment is an internal one, קיום בלב, of קבלת עול מלכות שמים. It would therefore appear that תשובה encompasses all the actions mentioned by the Rambam, including admission of guilt. From the subtle differences in language employed by the Rambam it would appear that he is describing two different types of תשובה, where each has a different motivating factor.

The Rav used the analogy of the annulment of vows which can be based either on חרטה or פתח. A vow is annulled by חרטה or remorse when the taker of the vow expresses that while the vow was taken with full knowledge and awareness, he regrets having come to that decision and would do anything to go back in time and stop himself from taking the vow in the first place. Someone who singes his hand by putting it in the fire recognizes that he indeed committed the act knowingly at

the time but the negative results of the act now make him wish that it never occurred in the first place. The remorse often expresses itself as retrospective disgust with the vow or action taken, even though at the time he willingly acted in that way.

An example of this mindset can be seen from the story of Amnon and Tamar. Amnon's infatuation with Tamar caused him to cross all moral boundaries. After he consummated their relationship he was overcome with disgust and disdain for Tamar. He wished he could go back in time and undo his actions as he saw in retrospect that they were wrong and imparted a stain upon him that he could not easily live with.

Recognition of sin echoes אבילות to a certain degree. When the Jews sinned with the golden calf and Moses descended from Sinai and rebuked them, the Torah says that they mourned, ויתאבלו. Why mourn instead of regret their actions? Because the act of sin mirrors the death and mourning process. The mourner recognizes how empty and changed his life is with the loss of his relative. He would do anything to be able to go back in time prior to the loss of his loved one and spend another day, minute, hour even moment with him/her. He regrets having wasted time on other things when he could have been spending it with his relative. The sinner who wakes up after the sin realizes how empty his life has become and longs to return to the state prior to sin. His melancholy state of mind is similar to the mourner.

The other method to annul a vow is through פתה. In this form, the taker of a vow reclassifies his vow, which was taken with full awareness, into one of mistaken identity. Had the person been aware of the situation that developed he never would have taken the vow. A vow taken under mistaken pretenses is null and void in and of itself. The בית דין or חכם that nullifies the vow through פתה is confirming that the vow was taken under mistaken pretenses and is therefore null and void. The person who takes the vow must be able to comprehend his initial action of taking the vow and why he has come to the realization that it was a mistake to do so from the very beginning.

פתה finds expression in repentance as well. The sinner realizes that had he known then what he knows now regarding the foolishness of his action, he never would have committed the sin. It is a rational approach to sin that leads him to regret his action. This rational regret may be utilitarian in nature. There may not be an aspect of embarrassment associated with the repentance but rather a rational process through which the sinner realizes that he would be better off without the sin.

Rambam presents an example of someone who repents after a forbidden relationship. The individual has the same passion for the person with whom he previously sinned. He is just as physically capable as he was previously. He finds himself in the same place and the situation and circumstances mirror those in play at the time of the original sin. Yet the person resists the temptation as he rationalizes that he must act differently this time. It is a difficult process, a heroic act which he undertakes to refrain from sin. He demonstrates that his previous act was a mistake in judgement and that it is worthy of nullification. This process of תשובה can take a long time but it is perhaps a more complete תשובה. Where the distinguishing characteristic of the תשובה of חרטה is embarrassment and a will to undo the original event, the תשובה of פתח says that he been aware of the information regarding the sin at the time of his actions he would surely have acted differently.

During the Slichos period, we repeat the refrain of בושנו ונכלמנו, we recoil in embarrassment from our actions. We also express in detail the sinful action we committed. Our תשובה in the period associated with Yamim Noraim is comprised of both the visceral as well as the analytical. We would like to reestablish our relationship with Gd on the footing we enjoyed prior to our sin. We also spend significant time on Yom Kippur analyzing our actions and admit and recognize that in retrospect we acted foolishly. How could we have acted in this way? On the night of Yom Kippur we express our initial regret and remorse for acting sinfully, בכולהון אחרטנא בהון, the repentance of remorse. Throughout the day of Yom Kippur we admit our faults and realize how foolishly we acted and that we erred in situations and actions we thought were good and appropriate for us. If we knew then what we know now, we never would have acted in such a ridiculous manner. Over the 25 hour period of Yom Kippur we experience תשובת חרטה and תשובת פתח.

Both forms of תשובה, חרטה and פתח, require וידיוי. However, the וידיוי in the תשובה of חרטה emphasizes the embarrassment associated with the act experienced by the individual. There is a deep sense of shame associated with the act that causes the sinner's stomach to turn. He cannot get far enough away from the sin as he is disgusted by the very thought of his actions. תשובה of פתח is a more introspective and analytical approach. Given what he knows now he never would have acted in such a way. Yet both forms of תשובה share a common theme and requirement of וידיוי. In order for an individual's repentance to be evident, it must be accompanied by a clear expression of the sin he committed. For if he is unable to express his sin verbally, then he undoubtedly lacks full understanding and appreciation of his actions and their effects. Such a person cannot repent fully. וידיוי crystalizes the sin

in his mind along with its negative effects and makes his true intent and remorse obvious for all, especially Gd, to see and accept.

With this understanding of the dual nature of תשובה we can understand the story of Joseph and his brothers who descend to Egypt to purchase food and are apprehended and imprisoned by Joseph. They subsequently proclaim their guilt and embarrassment over how they acted towards Joseph. They express the תשובה of חרטה. Why did they ignore his pleas for help when he fell in to their hands and they callously threw him into the pit? Why didn't they make more of an effort to understand and accept him? Why didn't they recognize his status as one of the שבטי י-ה? If only they could go back in time and act differently, if only they could undo the terrible deed they did. As the Midrash says, they were committed to ransom or rescue Joseph in any way possible.

Joseph is moved by their admission. However, they have not fully repented, as their actions could be viewed as the initial visceral reaction to their situation. Perhaps under similar circumstances, removed from the pressure of prison, they would act the same way as they did those many years ago. Joseph needed to force a reenactment, to place them in the same situation and see if the brothers would step up and demonstrate that they indeed had changed. They are forced to accept responsibility for Benjamin and bring him to Egypt. When they are faced with prospect of leaving Benjamin behind as a slave, Judah steps forward to place his life on the line for his brother. He repeats the story of how Jacob's wife bore him two children and one of them disappeared. They now realize how Jacob's life was so closely interconnected with that of Joseph, more so than any of the other children. They saw how the loss of Joseph impacted their father and how losing Benjamin would utterly crush him. They understand now the foolishness of their actions and if a similar opportunity arose, they would never again act in such a way. This time they admit their guilt through the rational פתה aspect, not through the simple remorse they expressed previously. Now Joseph can reveal himself to them and forgive them, for they have truly repented in thought and in deed.

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