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Teshuvah - Chapter Four

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Teshuvah - Chapter Five

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

אַרְבָּעָה וְעֶשְׂרִים דְּבָרִים מְעַכְּבִין אֶת הַתְּשׁוּבָה. אַרְבָּעָה מֵהֶן עָוֹן גָּדוֹל וְהָעוֹשֶׂה אֶחְד מֵהֶן אֵין הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּדְ הוּא מַסְפִּיק בְּיָדוֹ לַעֲשׁוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה לְפִי גֹּדֶל חֶטְאוֹ. וְאֵלוּ הֵן. א) הַמַּחְטִיא אֶת הָרַבִּים וּבִכְלַל עָוֹן וְאֵלוּ הֵן. א) הַמַּחְטִיא אֶת הָרַבִּים וּבִכְלַל עָוֹן וְהַמַּשֶּׁה אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ מִדֶּרֶדְ טוֹבָה לְרָעָה כְּגוֹן וְהַמַּשֶּׁה אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ מִדֶּרֶדְ טוֹבָה לְרָעָה כְּגוֹן מְסִית וּמַדִּיחַ. ג) הָרוֹאֶה בְּנוֹ יוֹצֵא לְתַרְבּוֹת בְּעָה וְאֵינוֹ מְמְחָה בִּוֹ הָיְה פּוֹרֵשׁ וְנִמְצָא כְּמַחְטִיאוֹ. וֹבְכְלַל עָוֹן זֶה כָּל שֶׁאֶפְשָׁר בְּיִדוֹ לִמְחוֹת בַּאֲחַרִים בֵּין יְחִיד בֵּין רַבִּים וְלֹא מִחְה אֶלְא יַנִּיחֵם בְּכִשְׁלוֹנְם. ד) וְהָאוֹמֵר אֶחְטָא וְיוֹם הַכִּפּבּוּרִים מְכַבֵּרים

וּמֵהֶן חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הַנּוֹעֲלִים דַּרְבֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה בִּפְנֵי עוֹשֵׁיהֶן, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן, א) הפּוֹרשׁ מו הצבּוּר, לפי שׁבּזמו שׁיעשׁוּ

- 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 mitzvoth; 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] Gechazi. 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" (<u>Deuteronomy 2:6</u>).

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).

תְשׁוּבַה לֹא יָהָיֶה עִמַּהֶן וְאֵינוֹ זוֹכָה עִמַּהֶן בָּזְכוּת שֵׁעוֹשִיזְ. ב) וְהַחוֹלֵק עַל דְּבְרֵי חַבַמִים, לִפִּי שַׁמַחְלַקתוֹ גּוֹרֵמֶת לוֹ לִפְּרשׁ ַמֶהֶן וָאֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ דַּרְכֵי הַתִּשׁוּבַה. ג) וְהַמַּלְעִיג על הַמְצוֹת, שַׁכֵּיוַן שַׁנְּתָבַּוּוּ בְּעֵינִיו אֵינוֹ רוֹדֵף אַחַרִיהָן וַלֹאַ עוֹשַׁן וַאָם לֹאַ יַעֲשָׁה בַּמֵּה יִזְכֵּה. ד) וְהַמְבַזֵּה רַבּוֹתַיו, שֵׁדַּבָר זֵה גּוֹרֵם לוֹ לְדַחֵפוֹ וּלְטַרְדוֹ כָּגֵיחַזִי וּבְזִמַן שַׁנְּטַרָד לֹא יָמְצָא מְלַמֶּד וּמוֹרָה לוֹ דֶּרֶךְ הַאָּמֶת. ה) וָהַשּׂוֹנֵא אָת הַתּוֹכַחוֹת שֶׁהַרֵי לֹא הָנִּיח לוֹי דֶּרֶדְ הְשׁוּבָה. שֶׁהַתּוֹכָחָה גּוֹרֵמֵת לִתְשׁוּבַה שָבַּזְמַן שַמּוֹדִיעִין לוֹ לַאַדָם חֲטַאַיו וּמַכְלִימִין אותו חוזר בָּתְשׁוּבַה כָּמוֹ שֶׁכַּתוּב בַּתּוֹרָה (דברים ט ז) "זָכֹר (וְ) אֱלֹ תִּשְׁכַּח". (דברים ט ז) "מַמְרִים הַיִיתִם". (דברים כט ג) "וָלֹא נַתַן ה' לַכֶם לֶב". (דברים לב ו) "עַם נַבַל וָלֹא חַכַם". וְבָן יִשְׁעַיָהוּ הוֹכִיחַ אָת יִשְׁרָאֵל וְאָמַר (ישעיה א ד) "הוי גוי חטא". (ישעיה א ג) "יַדַע שור קֹנֵהוּ". (ישעיה מח ד) "מְדַעִתִּי כִּי קַשָּׁה אַתַּה". וָכָן צְוָהוּ הָאֵל לְהוֹכִיחַ לַחַטַּאִים שַׁנַאֲמַר (ישעיה נח א) "קָרַא בְגַרוֹן אַל תַּחָשֹׁךְ". וָכָן כַּל הַנָּבִיאִים הוֹכִיחוּ לִישַּׁרָאֵל עד שַחַזָרוּ בִּתְשׁוּבַה. לְפִיכַךְ צַרִיךְ לְהַעַמִיד בָּכַל קַהַל וִקָהַל מִיִּשִּׂרָאֵל חַכַם גַּדוֹל וְזַקֵן וירא שמים מנעוריו ואהוב להם שיהא מוֹכִיחַ לָרַבִּים וּמַחַזִירָן בִּתְשׁוּבָה, וְזֵה שֵׁשׁוֹנֵא אָת הַתּוֹכַחוֹת אֵינוֹ בַּא לַמוֹכִיחַ וְלֹא שׁוֹמֵע דְבַרִיו לְפִיכַדְ יַעֲמֹד בְּחַטֹּאתַיו שָׁהֶם בְּעֵינַיו

טובים:

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.

- 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.

וּמֶהֶם חַמִּשָּׁה דְּבַרִים הַעוֹשֶה אוֹתַן אִי אָפָשַׁר לוֹ שֵׁיַשׁוּב בְּתָשׁוּבַה גָמוּרָה לְפִי שָׁהֶם עַוֹנוֹת שָׁבֶּין אַדָם לַחֲבֶרוֹ וְאֵינוֹ יוֹדֶע חַבַרוֹ שַׁחַטָא לוֹ כַּדֵי שַׁיַחַזִיר לוֹ אוֹ יִשְאַל מְמַנוּ לִמְחל לוֹ. וְאֵלוּ הֶן. א) הַמְקַלֵּל אֵת הַרַבִּים וָלֹא קַלֵּל אַדָם יַדוּעַ כָּדֵי שֵׁיִשָּׁאַל מְמֵנוּ כַפַּרָה. ב) וְהַחוֹלֵק עָם גַּנָב, שֶׁלְפִי שַׁאֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ גְּנֶבָה זוֹ שֶׁל מִי הִיא אֶלְא הַגַּנְב גוֹנֵב לָרַבִּים וּמֵבִיא לוֹ וְהוּא לוֹקַחַ. וְעוֹד שָׁהוּא מַחַזִיק יַד הַגַּנָּב וּמַחָטִיאוֹ. ג) וְהַמּוֹצֵא אַבַדָה וָאֵינוֹ מַכָרִיז עַלֵיהַ עַד שַׁיַחַזִירַה לָבְעָלֵיהָ, לְאַחַר זְמַן כְּשֶׁיַעֲשֶׂה הְּשׁוּבָה אֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ לְמִי יַחַזִיר. ד) וְהָאוֹכֵל שׁוֹר עַנְיַים ויתומים ואַלמנות. אַלוּ בְּנֵי אַדָם אִמְלַלִין הָם ואינן ידועים ומפרסמים וגולים מעיר לעיר וְאֵין לָהֶם מַכִּיר כָּדֵי שֵׁיֵדַע שוֹר זָה שֵׁל מִי הוא וְיַחַזִירֵנוּ לוֹ. ה) וְהַמְקבֵּל שׁחַד לְהַטּוֹת דִין אֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ עַד הֵיכָן הִגִּיעַ הַטָּיָה זוֹ וְכַמַּה ָהִיא כֹּחָהּ כְּדֵי שֶׁיַחֲזִיר, שֶׁהַדְּבָר יֵשׁ לוֹ רַגְלַיִם. וְעוֹד שָׁהוּא מַחָזִיק יַד זֵה וּמַחְטִיאוֹ:

- 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.

וּמֶהֶן חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבַרִים הַעוֹשָׂה אוֹתַן אֵין 🖿 חַזָּקַתוֹ לַשׁוּב מֶהֶן. לִפִּי שֶׁהֶם דְּבַרִים קַלִּים בָּעֵינֵי רֹב הַאַדַם וְנָמַצַא חוֹטֵא וְהוּא יַדַמָּה שַׁאֵין זָה חֶטָא. וָאֵלוּ הָן. א) הַאוֹכֵל מְסָעַדָּה שָׁאֵינַה מַסְפָּקָת לְבַעַלֵיהַ שָׁזָה אַבַק גול הוא. והוא מדמה שלא חטא ויאמר בָּלוּם אַכַלְתִּי אֵלָא בִּרְשׁוּתוֹ. ב) הַמְּשְׁתַּמְשׁ בַּעָבוֹטוֹ שֵׁל עַנִי שָׁהַעָבוֹט שֵׁל עַנִי אֵינוֹ אֵלַא בָּגוֹן קוֹרָדוֹם וּמַחֲרֵשָׁה וִיאׁמַר בִּלְבּוֹ אֵינַן חַסֶרִים וַהַרֵי לֹא גַּזַלְתִּי אותוֹ. ג) הַמְּסְתַּבֶּל בַּעַריות מַעַלֶה עַל דַעָתוֹ שָאֵין בְּכַדְ כָּלוּם שָׁהוּא אוֹמֶר וָכִי בַּעַלְתִּי אוֹ קַרַבְתִּי אֵצְלָה. וְהוֹא אֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁרְאִיַּת הַעֵינַיִם עַוֹן גָּדוֹל שָׁהָיא גּוֹרֶמֶת לְגוּפַן שֵׁל עַרְיוֹת שַׁנָאֵמֶר במדבר טו לט) "וְלֹאַ תָתָרוּ אַחֲבִי לְבַבְּכֶם וְאַחַרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם". ד) הַמְּתִכַּבֵּד בְּקְלוֹן חַבֶּרוֹ אומר בּלבּוֹ שַאֵינוֹ חֵטָא לְפִי שַׁאַין חַברוֹ עוֹמֶד שָׁם וָלֹא הָגִיע לוֹ בּשָׁת וַלֹא בִּיָשׁוֹ אֵלַא עַרַדְ מַעֲשָׂיו הַטּוֹבִים וְחַכְמַתוֹ לְמוּל מַעֲשָׂה חַבֵּרוֹ אוֹ חַכִמַתוֹ כָּדֵי שַׁיַּרָאֵה מִכְּלַלוֹ שַׁהוּא מְכַבֶּד וַחֲבֶרוֹ בַּזוּי. ה) וְהַחוֹשֶׁד כָּשֶׁרִים אוֹמֵר בַּלָבּוֹ שַׁאֵינוֹ חֵטָא לָפִי שַׁהוּא אוֹמֵר מַה עַשִּׂיתִי לוֹ וְכִי יֵשׁ שַׁם אֵלָא חֲשַׁד שַׁמַא עַשַׂה אוֹ לֹא עַשָּה וְהוּא אֵינוֹ יוֹדֵעַ שֵׁזֶה עַוֹן שָׁמֵשִים אַדָם כַּשֶׁר בִּדַעָתוֹ כִּבַעַל עַבַרָה: 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.

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.

וּמֵהֶן חֲמִשָּׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹשֶׂה אוֹתָם יִמְשֵׁךְ אַחֲבִיהֶם תְּמִיד וְקְשִׁים הֵם לִּפְרשׁ מֵהֶן. לְפִיכָךְ צָרִיךְ אָדָם לְהִזְּהֵר מֵהֶּן שָׁמְּא יִדְבַּק בָּהֶן וְהֵן כָּלָן דֵעוֹת רְעוֹת עַד מְשִׁלּוֹ הֵן. רְכִילוּת. וְלְשׁוֹן הְרַע. וּבַעַל מְחַשָּׁבָה רְעָה. וְהַמִּעְשִׁיו וְהֵן חַמְה. וּבַעַל מַחֲשָׁבָה רְעָה. וְהַמִּעְשִׁיו וְהֵן חַמְה. וּבַעַל מַחֲשָׁבָה רְעָה. וְהַמִּעְשִׁיו וְהֵן לְרָשְׁע מִפְּנֵי שָׁהוּא לוֹמֵד מִמַּעְשָׁיו וְהֵן נִרְשָׁע מִפְּנֵי שָׁהוּא לוֹמֵד מִמַּעְשָׁיו וְהֵן נִרְשָׁע מִפְּנִי שָׁהוּא לוֹמֵד מִמַּעְשָׁיו וְהֵן נִרְשָׁמִים בְּלְבוֹּ הוּא שֶׁאָמֵר שְׁלֹמֹה (משלי יג רְשְׁמִים בְּלְבוֹ הוֹא דְבִירִים שָׁצְרִיךְ כָּל אָדָם לִנְהֹג בְּהַלְנוֹת דֵעוֹת דְּבָרִים שָׁצְרִיךְ כָּל אָדָם לְנְהֹג בְּהַלְנוֹת דֵּעוֹת דְּבָרִים שָׁצְרִיךְ כָּל אָדָם לִנְהֹג בָּהַל תַּמְתֹּתְ לְבַעַל תִּשׁוֹבָה:

רָּכָּל אֵלוּ הַדְּבָרִים וְכַיּוֹצֵא בָּהֶן אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁמְעַכְּבִין אֶת הַתְּשׁוּבָה אֵין מוֹנְעִין אוֹתָהּ אֶלְא אָם עָשָׂה אָדָם תְּשׁוּבָה מֵהֶן הֲרֵי זֶה בַּעַל תְשׁוּבָה וְיֵשׁ לוֹ חֵלֶק לָעוֹלֶם הַבָּא:

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