

Rambam and Repentance



Rambam puzzles



Intro vs. the laws

Intro

הלכות תשובה: מצוות עשה אחת, והיא שישׁיב החוטא מחטאו לפני יי ויתודה. ובאור מצוה זו ועקרם הנגדרים עמה בגללה בפרקים אלו.

Laws of Teshuva: One positive mitzvah, ie. for the sinner to go back from his sin before G- d and confess..

Laws

כל המצוות שבתורה, בין עשה בין לא תעשה - אם עבר אדם על אחת מהן, בין בזדון בין בשגגה, כשיעשה תשובה וישׁיב מחטאו חייב להתודות לפני האל ברוך הוא

All commandments of the Torah, whether they be mandatory or prohibitive, if a man violates any one of them, either presumptuously or erroneously, when he will repent himself and turn away from his sinful way, he is obliged to confess before God, blessed is He!

So it's not a mitzvah? See this says the Rav, ch. 7

כָּל הַנְּבִיאִים כָּלֵן צִוּוּ עַל הַתְּשׁוּבָה, וְאִין יִשְׂרָאֵל נִגְאָלִין אֶלָּא בַּתְּשׁוּבָה. וּכְבָר הַבְּטִיחָה תּוֹרַה שְׁסוּף יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה בְּסוּף גְּלוּתוֹ, וּמִיָּד הֵן נִגְאָלִין, שְׁנַאֲמַר: "וְהָיָה כִּי יָבֹאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים... וְשַׁבַּת עַד יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ... וְשָׁב יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתֶךָ וְרַחֲמֶךָ, וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצֶךָ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר הִפִּיצֶךָ יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ שְׁמָה" (דברים ל, א-ג)

All of the prophets commanded concerning repentance; Israel will not be redeemed save by repentance. Indeed, the Torah long since assured us that in the end, at the close of the period of exile Israel will turn to repentance and be momentarily redeemed, even as it is said: "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessings and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt bethink thyself among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God had driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and hearken to His voice according to all that I commanded thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee" (Deut. 30.14).

כיצד מתוודה? אומר 'אנא יי, חטאתי, עויתי, פשעתי לפניך, ועשיתי כך וכך, והרי נחמתיי ובשתיי במעשי, ולעולם: 1,1
איני חוזר לדבר זה'. זה הוא עקרו שלודוי

How is the verbal confession made? The sinner says thus: "I beseech Thee, O Great Name! I have sinned; I have been obstinate; I have committed profanity against Thee, particularly in doing thus and such. Now, behold! I have repented and am ashamed of my actions; forever will I not relapse into this thing again." This is the elementary form of confession

אי זו היא תשובה גמורה? זה שָׁבָא לִידוֹ דְּבַר שְׁעֵבֵר בּוֹ וְאֶפְשָׁר בְּיָדוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת, וּפִרְשׁ וְלֹא עָשָׂה, מִפְּנֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה, לֹא : 2,1
מִירָאָה וְלֹא מִפְּשָׁלוֹן כֵּחַ. כִּיצַד? הֲרִי שְׁבָא עַל אִשָּׁה בַּעֲבָרָה, וְלֹא חָזַר זְמַן נִתְיַחַד עִמָּה, וְהוּא עוֹמֵד בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ בָּהּ, וּבְכַח גּוּפוֹ,
וּבְמִדְיָנָה שְׁעֵבֵר בָּהּ, וּפִרְשׁ וְלֹא עָבֵר - זה הוא בעל תשובה גמורה.

What is complete repentance? He who once more had in it in his power to repeat a violation, but separated himself therefrom, and did not do it because of repentance, not out of fear or lack of strength. For example? One who knew a woman sinfully, and after a process of time he met her again privately, and he still loving her as theretofore, and he being in a state of potency, and the meeting is in the same land where the sin was first committed, if he parted without sinning, he has attained complete repentance.

And...

ומה היא התשובה? הוא שיעזב החוטא חטאו, ויסירנו ממתשבתו, ויגמר בלבו שלא יעשהו עוד, שנאמר: "יעזב רשע דרכו ואיש און מחשבתיו" (ישעיה נה, ז).

וכן יתנחם על שעבר, שנאמר: "כי אחרי שובי נחמתי, ואחרי הודעי ספקתי על גרוד" (ירמיה לא, יח). ויעיד עליו יודע תעלומות שלא ישוב לזה החטא לעולם, שנאמר: "ולא נאמר עוד אלהינו למעשה ידינו, אשר בך ירחם יתום" (הושע יד, ד). וצריך להתודות בשפתינו, ולומר ענינות אלו שגמר בלבו

What is repentance? The sinner shall cease sinning, and remove sin from his thoughts, and wholeheartedly conclude not to revert back to it, even as it is said: "Let the wicked forsake his way" (Is. 55.7); so, too, shall he be remorseful on what was past, even as it is said: "Surely after that I was turned, I repented" (Jer. 31. 19). In addition thereto he should take to witness Him Who knoweth all secrets that forever he will not turn to repeat that sin again, according to what it is said: "Say unto Him.... neither will we call any more the work of our hands our gods" (Hos. 14.3-4). It is, moreover, essential that his confession shall be by spoken words of his lips, and all that which he concluded in his heart shall be formed in speech.

And how does this fit in?

מדרכי התשובה, להיות השב צועק תמיד לפני יי בבכי ובתחנונים, ועושה צדקה כפי כחו, ומתרחק הרבה מן הדבר שחטא בו, ומשנה שמו, כלומר שאני אחר ואיני אותו האיש שעשה אותן המעשים, ומשנה מעשיו כלן לטובה ולדרך ישרה, וגולה ממקומו, שגלות מכפרת עוון, מפני שגורמת לו להפנע ולהיות ענו ושפל רוח.

Among the ways of repentance are, for the penitent to continue to cry out in tearful supplication before the Name, to bestow alms according to his means, and to distance himself exceedingly from the thing wherein he sinned, to have his identity changed, as if saying: "I am now another person, and not that person who perpetrated those misdeeds", to completely change his conduct for the good and straight path, and to exile himself from his place of residence, for exile atones iniquity, because it leads him to submissiveness and to be meek and humble-spirited.

What about on Yom Kippur? Is that the same?

אף על פי שְׁהַתְּשׁוּבָה וְהִצְעָקָה יָפָה לְעוֹלָם, בְּעֶשְׂרֵת הַיָּמִים שְׁבִין רֵאשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה וַיּוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים הִיא יָפָה בְּיוֹתֵר, וּמִיָּד הִיא מִתְקַבֶּלֶת, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "דַּרְשׁוּ יי בְּהִמָּצְאוֹ, קְרֹאֵהוּ בְּהִיּוֹתוֹ קְרוֹב" (ישעיה נה,ו). בְּמָה דְבָרִים אָמוּרִים? בְּיַחֲדָה. אָבֵל בְּצַבּוּר - כָּל זְמַן שְׁעוֹשִׁין תְּשׁוּבָה וְצוֹעֲקִין בְּלֵב שָׁלֵם הֵן נֶעֱנִין, שְׁנֵאָמַר: "כִּי אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכֹל קְרֹאֵנוּ אֱלִינוּ" (דברים ז,ז).

Although it is ever well to cry out and repent, but during the space of the ten days' time between Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom ha-Kippurim it is exceedingly better, and the supplication is presently accepted, even as it is said: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found" (Is. 55.6). But that is saying solely concerning an individual, but a community every time they cry out a whole hearted repentance they are answered, even as it is said: "As the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for" (Deut. 6.7).

יום הכּפּוּרִים הוא זמן תּשׁוּבָה לְכָל, לְיַחֲדִיד וְלָרַבִּים, וְהוּא קִוּ מַחֲלָה וְסָלִיחָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, לְפִיכּוּד חַיְבִין הַכּל לַעֲשׂוֹת תּשׁוּבָה וְלִהְתּוֹדוֹת בְּיוֹם הַכּפּוּרִים. וּמִצּוֹת וְדוּי יוֹם הַכּפּוּרִים שְׂיִתְחִיל מֵעֶרֶב הַיּוֹם קֹדֶם שְׂיֵאכֹל, שְׂמָא יִחְנַק בְּסַעוּדָה קֹדֶם שְׂיִתְוֹדָה. וְאִם עַל פִּי שְׂהִתְוֹדָה קֹדֶם שְׂאָכֹל, חוֹזֵר וּמִתְוֹדָה בְּלַיְלֵי יוֹם הַכּפּוּרִים עֶרְבִית, וְחוֹזֵר וּמִתְוֹדָה בַּשַּׁחֲרִית וּבַמּוֹסֵף וּבַמִּנְחָה וּבַבְּעִילָה. וְהֵיכֵן מִתְוֹדָה? יַחֲדִיד - אַחַר תּפִּלְתּוֹ; וּשְׂלִיחַ צְבוּר - בְּאַמְצַע תּפִּלְתּוֹ, בְּבִרְכָה רְבִיעִית

Yom ha-Kippurim is the time set aside for repentance for all, the individual as well as the many; for it is the goal of exoneration and quittance in Israel. Because thereof all are obliged to make reparation and confession on the Day of Atonement. The commandment to confess on the Day of Atonement obliges every one to commence it during the afternoon on the ninth day of Tishri, before the evening meal, lest he be sufficated eating his meal before he confess. And, though he did confess before his meal, one is obliged to confess again during the night prayer of the Day of Atonement, and to repeat the confession during the Morning, Addition, Oblation, and Closing Prayers. At what part of the prayers is the confession made? Every individual delivers it after the silent Benedictions, but the public Reader in the midst of his prayers, after the Fourth Benediction.¹

So is it the same confessional?

יום הכּפּוּרִים הוא זמן תּשׁוּבָה לְכָל, לְיַחֲד וּלְרַבִּים, וְהוּא קוֹץ מְחִילָה וּסְלִיחָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, לְפִיכּוֹד חֵיבִין הַכָּל לַעֲשׂוֹת תּשׁוּבָה וּלְהִתְוֹדוֹת בְּיוֹם הַכּפּוּרִים. וּמִצְוֹת וּדְוֵי יוֹם הַכּפּוּרִים שְׂיִתְחִיל מֵעֶרֶב הַיּוֹם קֹדֶם שְׂיֵאכֹל, שְׂמָא יִחְנַק בְּסַעוּדָה קֹדֶם שְׂיִתְוֹדָה. וְאִם עַל פִּי שְׂהִתְוֹדָה קֹדֶם שְׂאֵכֹל, חוּזֵר וּמִתְוֹדָה בְּלֵילֵי יוֹם הַכּפּוּרִים עֶרְבִית, וְחוּזֵר וּמִתְוֹדָה בְּשַׁחֲרִית וּבְמוֹסָף וּבְמִנְחָה וּבְנֶעֱלָה. וְהֵיכֵן מִתְוֹדָה? יַחֲד - אַחַר תְּפִלָּתוֹ; וּשְׂלִיחַ צְבוּר - בְּאַמְצַע תְּפִלָּתוֹ, בְּבִרְכַּה רְבִיעִית.

Yom ha-Kippurim is the time set aside for repentance for all, the individual as well as the many; for it is the goal of exoneration and quittance in Israel. Because thereof all are obliged to make reparation and confession on the Day of Atonement. The commandment to confess on the Day of Atonement obliges every one to commence it during the afternoon on the ninth day of Tishri, before the evening meal, lest he be sufficated eating his meal before he confess. And, though he did confess before his meal, one is obliged to confess again during the night prayer of the Day of Atonement, and to repeat the confession during the Morning, Addition, Oblation, and Closing Prayers. At what part of the prayers is the confession made? Every individual delivers it after the silent Benedictions, but the public Reader in the midst of his prayers, after the Fourth Benediction.¹

Teshuva on Character

ואל תאמר שאין התשובה אלא מעברות שיש בהן מעשה, כגון זנות וגזל וגנבה; כשם שצריך אדם לשוב מאלו, כך הוא צריך לחפש בדעות רעות שיש לו ולשוב מהן: מן הפעס, ומן האיבה, ומן הקנאה, ומן התחרות, ומן ההתל, ומרדיפת הממון והכבוד, ומרדיפת המאכלות וכיוצא בהן - מן הכל צריך לחזור בתשובה. ואלו העוונות קשין מאותן שיש בהן מעשה; שבזמן שאדם נשקע באלו - קשה הוא לפרש. וכן הוא אומר: "יעזב רשע דרכו ואיש און מחשבתי" (ישעיה נה,ז).

Do not say that no repentance is needed save on sins to which action is attached, for example: prostitution, robbery, or theft. For even as it is necessary for man to repent from such, so it is necessary for him to search his bad tendencies, to turn in repentance from anger, from hatred, from jealousy, from deceit, from pursuing after wealth, honor, feasting and such like these; yea, from all of these it is necessary for him to turn in repentance. Indeed these iniquities are more grievous and more difficult for a man to be separated from than those which require action, for on such the prophet Isaiah said: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts" (Is. 55.7).

Why does the Rambam wax so poetical?

גדולה תשובה, שמקרבת את האדם לשיכינה, שנאמר: "שובה ישראל עד יי אלהיך" (הושע יד, ב), ונאמר: "שובו עדי נאם יי" (יואל ב, יב; ושם: נאם יי שבו עדי), ונאמר: "אם תשוב ישראל נאם יי אלי תשוב" (ירמיה ד, א), כלומר: אם תחזור בתשובה - פי תדבק.

התשובה מקרבת את הרחוקים: אמש הנה זה שנוי לפני המקום, משקץ ומרחק ותועבה, והיום הוא אהוב ונחמד, קרוב וידיד. וכן אפה מוצא שבלשון שהקדוש ברוך הוא מרחק את החטאים - בזה מקרב את השבים, בין יחיד בין רבים, שנאמר: "והנה במקום אשר יאמר להם לא עמי אתם, יאמר להם בני אל חי" (הושע ב, א), ונאמר ביכניה ברשעותו: "פתבו את האיש הנה ערירי, גבר לא יצלח בימיו" (ירמיה כב, ל), "אם יהנה פניהו בן יהויקים מלך יהודה חותם על יד ימיני" (שם כב, כד). וכיון ששב בגלותו, נאמר בנרבבל בנו: "ביום ההוא נאם יי צבאות, אקח נרבבל בן שאלתיאל עבדי נאם יי, ושמתיך כחותם" (חגי ב, כג).

Great, indeed, is repentance for it brings man nigh to the Shekinah, even as it is said: "Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God" (Hosea, 14. 2); and it is further said: "Yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord" (Amos, 4.6); and it is yet again said: "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, yea, return unto Me" (Jer. 4.1), as if saying: "If thou wilt turn in repentance ye will cleave unto Me". Repentance brings near the far apart. But yesterday this sinner was hateful to the presence of God, scorned, ostracized and abominate, and to-day he is beloved, desirable, companionable and a friend. Thou findest, moreover, that in the very language God employs to distance the sinners He employs to bring nigh unto Him the penitent whether the individual or the many, even as it is said: "And it shall come to pass that, instead of that which was said unto them, 'Ye are not My people', it shall be said unto them: 'Ye are the children of the living God'. And, again it is said of Jeconiah: "Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days, (Jer. 22.30) though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon My right hand yet would I pluck thee thence" (Ibid. – 24); but when he repented, being in exile, it is said of his son Zerubbabel: "In that day, saith the lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet" (Haggai, 2.23).

כַּמָּה מַעֲלָה מַעֲלַת הַתְּשׁוּבָה: אָמַשׁ הָיָה זֶה מִבְּדֵל מִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "עֲוֹנֹתֵיכֶם הָיוּ מִבְּדֵלִים בֵּינְכֶם לְבֵין אֱלֹהֵיכֶם" (ישעיה נט,ב); צוּעַק וְאִינוּ נֹעֲנָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "גַּם כִּי תִרְבוּ תַפְלָה אֵינֶנִּי שֹׁמֵעַ" (שם א,טו); וְעוֹשֶׂה מְצוּת וְטוֹרְפִין אוֹתוֹ בְּפָנָיו, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "מִי בִקֵּשׁ זֹאת מִיָּדְכֶם רָמַס חֲצָרַי" (שם א,יב), "מִי גַם בָּכֶם וַיִּסְגֹּר דְלָתַיִם" (מלאכי א,י), "עֲלוֹתֵיכֶם סָפוּ עַל זְבַחֵיכֶם וְאָכְלוּ בָשָׂר" (ירמיה ז,כא).

וְהַיּוֹם הוּא מִדְּבַק בַּשְׂכִּינָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבָקִים בֵּי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם" (דברים ד,ד); צוּעַק וְנֹעֲנָה מִיָּד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְהָיָה טָרַם יִקְרָאוּ וְאֲנִי אֶעֱנֶה" (ישעיה סה,כד); וְעוֹשֶׂה מְצוּת וּמְקַבְּלִין אוֹתוֹ בְּנַחַת וְשִׂמְחָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "כִּי כִכֹּר רָצָה הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת מַעֲשֵׂיךָ" (קהלת ט,ז). וְלֹא עוֹד, אֲלָא שְׂמֵתָאִים לָהֶם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְעַרְבָה לִי מִנַּחַת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַיִם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם וּכְשָׁנַיִם קִדְמֹנִית" (מלאכי ג,ד).

How superior is the degree of repentance! But yesterday was this sinner separated from the Lord God of Israel, even as it is said: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God" (Is. 59.2); cries, but received no answer, even as it is said: "Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear" (Ibid. 1.15); does obey commandments, but they are thrown back in his face, even as it is said: "Who hath required this at your hand, to trample My courts"? (Ibid.–12), and, "Oh that there were even among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on Mine altar in vain!" (Mal. 1.10). But to-day he is connected with the Shekinah, even as it is said: "But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day" (Deut. 4.4); he cries and receives answer momentarily, even as it is said: "And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer" (Is. 65.24); he observes commandments, and they are received with pleasure and joy, even as it is said: "For God hath already accepted thy works" (Ecc. 9.7); moreover, his works are pleasurably anticipated, even as it is said: "Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years" (Mal. 3.4).

The Rambam talks about reward and punishment in these laws and then says not to worship for reward...

הַעֹבֵד מֵאַהֲבָה - עוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה וּבַמִּצְוֹת וְהוֹלֵךְ בְּנִתְיָבוֹת הַחֻקִּים לֹא מִפְּנֵי דָבָר בְּעוֹלָם, לֹא מִפְּנֵי יִרְאַת הָרָעָה וְלֹא כְּדֵי לִירֹשׁ הַטּוֹבָה, אֲלֵא עוֹשֶׂה הָאֱמֶת מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהִיא אֱמֶת, וְסוֹף הַטּוֹבָה לָבוֹא בְּכָל־ל

וּמַעֲלָה זֹה הִיא מַעֲלָה גְדוֹלָה עַד מְאֹד, וְאִין כָּל חָכָם זוֹכֵה לָהּ. וְהִיא מַעֲלַת אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ, שֶׁקָּרָאוּ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא "אַהֲבִי" (ישעיה מא,ח), לְפִי שֶׁלֹּא עָבַד אֱלֹהִים מֵאַהֲבָה. וְהִיא הַמַּעֲלָה שֶׁצִּוּנוּ בָּהּ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עַל יְדֵי מֹשֶׁה רַבְּנוּ,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְאַהֲבֵת אֵת יי אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ" (דברים ו,ה). וּבְזִמְנֵן שֶׁיֵּאָהֵב אֵת יי אַהֲבָה הִרְאוּנוּ - מִיָּד יַעֲשֶׂה כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת מֵאַהֲבָה.

The worshiper because of love, engages himself in the study of the Torah and the observance of precepts and follows the paths of wisdom on no account in the world, neither for fear of evil nor in order to inherit the good; but he does the true thing because it is true, and in the end the good comes because thereof,. That degree is a great degree, indeed and not every scholar attains it; for such was the degree of Abraham our father, whom the Holy One, blessed is He! called His beloved, because he worshiped not, save because of love, and it is, furthermore, the degree concerning which the Holy One, blessed is He! commanded through Moses, saying: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Deut. 6.5); for, when man will love the Lord with a proper love, he will momentarily perform all of the commandments because of love.

Organization:

Knowledge “Laws”: Fundamentals, character, Torah, Idolatry, Teshuva

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So.. where does Teshuva fit in?

Laws of Knowledge, faith, character

Teshuva

Laws of Love, devotion

Historical Connection? Iggeret Teiman?

The need for the epistle arose because of [religious persecution](#) and [heresy](#) in 12th century [Yemen](#), marked by a [pseudo-Messiah](#) that had arisen there. The man who claimed to be Israel's Messiah began preaching a [syncretistic religion](#) that combined [Judaism and Islam](#), and claimed that the [Bible](#) had foretold his coming as a [prophet](#). One of the leaders of the Jewish community in Yemen, [Rabbi Ya'akov](#), the son of the illustrious Rabbi [Netanel Fayyumi](#), had addressed his concerns in a letter which he had sent to Maimonides, who was in Egypt. Rabbi Ya'akov had conjectured that perhaps the influences of the stars were responsible for these occurrences, to which conjectures Maimonides replied that Rabbi Ya'akov ought to expunge from his heart the vain concept of being able to determine the influences of the constellations, yet counselled him and the Jewish people of Yemen on how they were to act with respect to the pseudo-Messiah in order to be saved from his harmful effects.

The [persecution](#)^[3] and increasing [apostasy](#) led one of Yemen's most respected Jewish scholars, [Rabbi Ya'akov](#), to write for counsel to Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, better known as Maimonides.

Maimonides response was written in [Judeo-Arabic](#) that was later translated into [Hebrew](#) by [Nahum Ma'arabi](#).^[4] This letter made a tremendous impression on Yemenite Jewry, and effectively stopped the [new religious movement](#). It also served as a source of strength, consolation and support for the faith in the continuing persecution.