

# Teshuva, Repentance A Decision or a Mitzvah?



# Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Aristotle (especially in the *Rhetoric*) discusses certain characteristic features of persons at different stages in life—how young men differ from men late in life, and so forth. Still, his view was that one's second nature, one's ethically relevant dispositions to choose, to act, and to respond, tends to be stable rather than easily changed. The dispositions into which a person settles shape the person's judgments, awareness, and deliberations. It is not as though there is rational agency and separate from that are elements of character. One's character *just is* the form that one's rational agency takes on account of how specific dispositions are reflected in one's choices, actions, and responses. In this view the person established in vice may not even be able to recognize what virtue requires. After all, that person is settled in a (wrong) conception of what is worthwhile and desirable and may see no reason to revise that conception.

# Intro vs. the laws

## Intro

הלכות תשובה: מצוות עשה אחת, והיא שישׁיׁשוב 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 וישׁיׁשוב 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 כָּלָן צִוּוּ עַל הַתְּשׁוּבָה, וְאִין יִשְׂרָאֵל נִגְאָלִין אֶלָּא בַתְּשׁוּבָה. וּכְבָר הַבְּטִיחָה תּוֹרַה שְׁסוּף יִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה בְּסוּף גְּלוּתוֹ, וּמִיָּד הֵן נִגְאָלִין, שְׁנַאֲמַר: "וְהָיָה כִּי יָבֹאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים... וְשָׁבַת עַד יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ... וְשָׁב יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת (שְׁבוּתָה וְרַחֲמָה, וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר הִפִּיצָה יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁמָּה" (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).

# Kant and morality, the categorical imperative

Kant wholeheartedly believes that morality comes from the authority of human reason and is not simply invented by God. Kant states that “no one, not even God, can be the author of the laws of morality, since they have no origin in will, but instead a practical necessity” (*Lectures*, “The Law Giver”).

That may explain this next passage, ch. 10

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

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

וּמַעֲלָה זֹה הִיא מַעֲלָה גְדוֹלָה עַד מְאֹד, וְאִין כָּל חֻקִּים זֹכָה 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 רַבֵּנוּ,

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְאַהֲבֵת אֵת יי אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ" (דברים ו,ה). וּבִזְמַן שֶׁיֵּאָהֵב אֵת יי אַהֲבָה הִרְאוּהָ - 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.

אי זו היא תשובה גמורה? זה שָׁבָא לְיָדוֹ דְּבַר שְׁעֵבֶר בּוֹ וְאַפְשָׁר בְּיָדוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת, וּפִירֵשׁ וְלֹא עָשָׂה, מִפְּנֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה, לֹא : 2,1  
מִירָאָה וְלֹא מִפְּשָׁלוֹן כַּח. כִּיצַד? הֲרִי שְׁבָא עַל אִשָּׁה בְּעִבְרָה, וְלֹאֲחֵר זְמַן נִתְיַחַד עִמָּה, וְהוּא עוֹמֵד בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ בָּהּ, וּבְכַח גּוֹפּוֹ,  
וּבְמִדְיָנָה שְׁעֵבֶר בָּהּ, וּפִירֵשׁ וְלֹא עָבֵר - זֶה הוּא בְּעַל תְּשׁוּבָה גְּמוּרָה.

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 ממחשבתו, 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

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# Why does the Rambam put this in the laws of Teshuva?

רְשׁוּת כָּל אָדָם נְתוּנָה לוֹ: אִם רָצָה לְהַטּוֹת עַצְמוֹ לְדֶרֶךְ טוֹבָה וְלִהְיוֹת צַדִּיק - הָרְשׁוּת בְּיָדוֹ; וְאִם רָצָה לְהַטּוֹת עַצְמוֹ לְדֶרֶךְ רָעָה וְלִהְיוֹת רָשָׁע - הָרְשׁוּת בְּיָדוֹ. הוּא שְׂכַתוֹב בַּתּוֹרָה: "הֵן הָאָדָם הֵיךָ כְּאֶחָד מִמְּנוֹ לְדַעַת טוֹב וְרָע" (בראשית ג, כב). כְּלוּמַר: הֵן מִיִּן זֶה שְׂלֹא אָדָם הֵיךָ אֶחָד בְּעוֹלָם, וְאִין לוֹ מִיִּן שְׁנֵי דוּמָה לוֹ בְּזֵה הָעֲנִין, שְׁיֵהָא הוּא מֵעַצְמוֹ בְּדַעַתוֹ וּבְמַחְשַׁבְתּוֹ יוֹדַע הַטּוֹב וְהָרָע, וְעוֹשֶׂה כָּל מַה שֶׁהוּא חֲפִץ, וְאִין לוֹ מִי שְׁיַעֲכֹב עַל יָדוֹ מְלַעְשׂוֹת הַטּוֹב אוֹ הָרָע. וְכִיּוֹן שְׂכֹן הוּא - "פֶּן יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ..." (שם).

Every man was endowed with a free will; if he desires to bend himself toward the good path and to be just it is within the power of his hand to reach out for it, and if he desires to bend himself to a bad path and to be wicked it is within the power of his hand to reach out for it. This is known from what it is written in the Torah, saying: "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Gen. 3.22), that is as if saying: "Behold, this species, man, stands alone in the world, and there is no other kind like him, as regards this subject of being able of his own accord, by his reason and thought, to know the good and the evil, and to do whatever his inclination dictates him with none to stay his hand from either doing good or evil; and, being that he is so, 'Lest he put forth his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'" (Ibid.)

הואיל וְרִשׁוּת כָּל אָדָם נְתוּנָה לוֹ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁבִּאֲרָנוּ (לעיל ה,א) - יִשְׁתַּדֵּל אָדָם לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה וְלִנְעַר כַּפָּיו מִחַטָּאִיו, כְּדֵי שְׂיִמּוֹת וְהוּא בְּעַל תְּשׁוּבָה, כְּדֵי שְׂיִזְכֶּה לְחַיֵּי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

Because every man was endowed with self-will, as we have elucidated, it is meet that man shall strive to repent, to confess his sins by word of his mouth, and to dust off his hands from his sins, as a preparation for death after repentance, so that he may acquire life in the World to Come.

# What is confessional? What is teshuva?

כיצד מתודה? אומר 'אנא יי, חטאתי, עויתי, פשעתי לפניה, ועשיתי כך וכך, והרי נחמתיי ובלשתי במעשי, ולעולם איני חוזר לדבר זה'. זה הוא עקרו שלודוי, וכל המרבה להתודות ולהאריך בענין זה - הרי זה משבח.

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 שפא לידו דבר שעבר בו ואפשר בידו לעשות, ופירש ולא עשה, מפני התשובה, לא מיראה ולא מפשלוון כח. כיצד? הרי שפא על אשה בעברה, ולאחר זמן נתניחד עמה, והוא עומד באהבתו בה, ובכח גופו, ובמדינה שעבר בה, ופירש ולא עבר - זה הוא בעל תשובה גמורה.

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כָּל הַמְתוּדָה בְּדִבְרֵימָה וְלֹא גָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ לַעֲזֹב - הֲרִי זֶה דּוֹמֵה לְטוֹבֵל וְשָׂרֵץ בְּיָדוֹ, שְׂאִין הַטְּבִילָה מוּעֵלֶת עַד שְׂיִשְׁלִיף הַשָּׂרֵץ, וְכֵן הוּא אוֹמֵר: "וַיְמוּדָה וְעִזַּב יְרַחֵם" (משלי כח, יג). וְצָרִיף לְפָרֵט אֶת הַחֲטָא, שְׂנֵאָמַר: "אֲנִי חָטָא הָעַם הַזֶּה חָטָאָה גְדוֹלָה (וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם אֱלֹהֵי זָהָב) (שמות לב, לא

He who confesses by speech but has not his heart's consent to abandon his erstwhile conduct, behold him, he is like one taking an immersion of purification and in his grasp is an impure creeping thing, when he knows the immersion to be of no value till he cast away the impure creeping thing. Even so it is advised to do, saying: "But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall shall obtain mercy" (Pro. 28. 13). In confessing to God, it is obligatory to name the sin, even as it is said: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them a god of gold" (Ex. 32.31).

# Rabbi Dessler

Everyone has a different nekudat habechira, a point of choice, and is responsible for that...