



VIDEO OUTLINE

TESHUVAH:
WHAT IS REAL REPENTANCE?

This guide corresponds to the video:
[Is There A Right Way To Do Teshuvah?](#)

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The Areivim Philanthropic Group
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VIDEO OUTLINE

<VIDEO 1>

- I. Introduction
 - A. How can we have objectives that govern seemingly subjective *teshuvah*/repentance?
 - i. Laws give structure to an otherwise amorphous process.
 - 1. What is Maimonides's path to repentance?
- II. Is there a command to do *teshuvah*/repent?
 - A. On the one hand: it's so fundamental, there must be.
 - B. On the other hand: there's a problem with the idea of there being a mitzvah to repent.
 - i. Maimonides (1:1)
 - 1. "When one transgresses... when one repents, one is obligated to confess."
 - 2. Repentance itself is not a command. Only one aspect of it is: confession.
 - a. Why? How can we make sense of this?
 - ii. Logical approach
 - 1. Repentance can only take place after a transgression of a command.
 - 2. Logically, you cannot have a command to repent. You are already disregarding the command of the Torah. If you listened to commands, you wouldn't have done anything wrong in the first place.
 - iii. Theory
 - 1. Both logic and Maimonides tell us that repentance itself is not a command.
 - 2. Instead, it's a choice. I have to choose that I want to return.
 - a. Maimonides: *if* you make that choice to return, do it the right way.
 - b. The laws of repentance teach the right way.
 - i. If you make the choice, the only command is confession.
 - ii. Why?

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- III. 4 Elements of Teshuvah
 - A. Overview: The 4 Elements
 - i. No longer committing the sin
 - ii. Commitment not to do it in the future
 - iii. Regret for what was done in the past
 - iv. Confession (aloud) to whomever one offended
 - 1. "Which one of these things is not like the other?"
 - a. Confession is the only **interpersonal** element.
 - b. Everything else can be done by oneself.

2. The most out of place element is the only one that Maimonides defines as a command.
 - a. Why?
 - b. First, let's take a look at the other three elements.
- B. In-Depth Look: First 3 Elements (A-C)
- i. What is the common thread between these three?
 1. All related to **time**: past, present, and future
 - ii. Maybe, in essence, they are all the same thing in different time frames.
 1. In different time frames, that 1 idea is called different things.
 - a. **What is that 1 idea?**
 - i. Leaving behind a wrong. That's not just in a present.
 2. If so, why do I need all three elements?
 - a. We live in all 3 worlds simultaneously.
 - i. Present is formed by memory and anticipation.
 - b. If so, leaving behind a sin also needs to be done in all three worlds.
 - iii. But with just these 3 (which are really 1), I haven't accomplished teshuvah.
 1. Maimonides says that confession (articulation) is the real teshuvah.
 - a. Why? What does confession add to the mix? Why is it so crucial?

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- C. In-Depth Look: The 4th Element – Confession
- i. Maimonides' analogy (2:3) – someone who confesses but didn't resolve to stop doing the sin is comparable to one who goes in a mikvah while holding onto an [impure] creature.
 - ii. Analysis of analogy:
 1. Holding onto the creature = holding onto the sin
 2. Just releasing the insect doesn't make you pure. Going into the mikvah makes you pure. The transformation happens in the mikvah.
 3. Going into a mikvah = confessing one's crime
 - iii. What does this analogy really mean?
- D. Bringing it All Together
- i. Why are the first 3 elements not enough?
 1. These elements are not interpersonal.
 2. Every wrong damages a relationship (with people or with God).
 3. Proper teshuvah involves repairing the damaged relationship.
 - a. That's confession. Repairing the relationship is the command.
 - ii. Confession doesn't work unless you do the other 3 things.
 1. It's like entering a mikvah, holding a creature.
 2. But after you've laid the foundation to repair the relationship, repair it.

IV. How does confession repair the relationship?

- A. Hebrew for confession is “וידוי/vidui.” Root: ה-ד-י.
 - i. What other words come from that root?
 - ii. Word for “Thank you (הודאה)” and for “I’m sorry” is the same.
 - 1. Why? How are “thank you” and “I’m sorry” the same thing?

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- 2. “Thank you” is recognition of value of what one has done.
 - 3. “I’m sorry” is also a recognition – of a negative.
 - a. Both: Recognition of an *imbalance* in a relationship.
 - iii. Question: Is there a way to restore balance without reciprocation?
 - iv. Answer: With הודאה/hoda’ah. With recognition.
 - 1. When you recognize the imbalance and the other person accepts the recognition, somehow the imbalance goes away.
 - 2. וידוי/confession restores the relationship.
- B. Back to Maimonides
 - i. The only command is confession. Why?
 - 1. 3 are intrapersonal. Confession is interpersonal – it repairs relationships.
 - ii. There is no command to change. But if you want to, there’s a way to do it.
 - 1. Recognition has to be sincere. If you skirt responsibility, it doesn’t repair.
 - iii. Maimonides is giving us a roadmap of the most essential parts of Yom Kippur.
 - 1. If the day is about repentance, the essence of repentance is confession.
 - 2. Letting go of the sin is only the prerequisite. The essence of Yom Kippur is about repairing relationships.