

**** Shaar HaTeshuva - Gate of Repentance ****

from Chovos Halevavos - Duties of the Heart by Rabeinu Bahya ibn Paquda zt'l

english translation by Rabbi Yosef Sebag

Level: Intermediate

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Translator's Foreword:

The following is a translation of the seventh gate of one of the earliest of the classic mussar works, Chovos Halevavos by Rabeinu Bahya. The book has inspired many great men to walk in its ways and review it throughout their lives.

In this second revision, I added select commentaries and also checked/compared every sentence against the brilliant translation by Rabbi Moses Hyamson O.B.M., the former chief Rabbi and head Dayan of England between 1911 and 1913. The translator studied in various yeshivas under great Torah scholars such as Rabbi Dov Shwartzman zt'l (~2 years), Rabbi Nachman Bulman zt'l, Rabbi Nissan Kaplan (~5 years). He also completed a degree in physics at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and was a research associate in nuclear physics for some time before heading off to yeshiva.

- Yosef Sebag, Jerusalem Shevat 5774/ December 2013 -

Abbreviations used in this translation:

MH - Manoach HaLevavos commentary by Rabbi Manoach Hendel (1540-1611)

TL - Tov HaLevanon commentary by Rabbi Yisrael Halevi (1700-1777)

PL - Pas Lechem commentary by Rabbi Chaim Avraham Hacoen (1740-1815)

ML - Marpe Lenefesh commentary by Rabbi Refael Mendel (1825-1895)

***** Shaar HaTeshuva - Gate of Repentance *****

from Chovos Halevavos - Duties of the Heart

by Rabeinu Bachye zt'l

the obligation of repentance, its requirements, and matters it depends on

***** INTRODUCTION *****

Since our preceding discussion dealt with the subject of submission, which is the root and beginning of repentance, I deemed it fit to follow with a clarification of its essential parts and the ways to complete its fulfillment.

I will start with the obligation and necessity for repentance. For it is already clear to us through reason and scripture that a human being falls short in the fulfillment of his service to the Creator which he is under duty to perform.

Through reason:

By what we observe of man, his changing nature, his composition of different elements, his opposing natures

(good/evil inclination - ML), his changing moods and emotions, the changing of circumstances which motivate his behavior. All this inevitably causes changes in his actions according to the state he is in, such as from decent to indecent, wicked to righteous, good to evil. For this it was necessary for the torah to restrain him (from evil) and guide him (to good).

(*Pas Lechem*: the soul and the body are the basis of his composition, and they are diametrically different because the soul tends towards the spiritual while the body tends to the physical..)

Tov Halevanon: his nature changes, to love something and then afterwards hate it...His traits such as anger or contentment, etc. change in him according to his age, place, and habit ... and a human being's behavior follows his nature, traits, and [habitual] conduct)

Through scripture:

Among them, what the verse says: "*for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*" (Bereishis 8:21), and "*the L-ord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Bereishis 6:5), and "*a man is born as a wild donkey's colt*" (Iyov 11:12), and "*Behold, the moon has no brightness*" (Iyov 25:5) and "*how much less, man, who is a worm, and the son of man, who is but a maggot!*" (Iyov 25:6), and "*[How then can man be justified with G-d,] or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?*" (Iyov 25:4).

(*Manoach Halevavos*: "*Behold, the moon has no brightness*" - some of the commentaries on the book of Iyov explain this verse that it is an analogy, namely that the intellect of man which is from the soul, and the soul is referred to as a "candle", as in the verse "*the candle of G-d is the soul of man*" (Mishlei 20:27). Hence he is saying that the intellect does not illuminate in a man until he brings it out from potential to actual (through torah study) just like the moon does not illuminate in the beginning of the month until it receives its light from the sun.

Tov Halevanon: The early sages already said that a man's intellect receives light from the torah, just like the moon receives its light from the sun. This is what is meant "*behold, the moon*", i.e. it is like the moon, "*which has no brightness*" - it does not illuminate on its own, because it is a dark mass. Only the sun grants it light. So too the intellect of man does not shine from the side of the physical body. Some commentaries explain the verse to refer to great men - that their righteousness will be shown to be null and void if G-d chooses to judge their deeds strictly.)

Since we have clarified the reality that man's actions fall short, it was out of Divine grace to man that the Creator gave him the capability of rectifying his mistake and of returning the loss of his service through repentance. G-d encouraged the matter and promised (its effectiveness) through his servants, the prophets. And He expanded the possible excuses (vindications) for the man who went off the path of His service, and promised us that He would accept these excuses from us, and desire in us quickly, even if we rebelled against His word and broke His covenant for a long time as written: "*And when a wicked man repents of his wickedness and performs justice and righteousness, he shall live thereby...*" (Yechezkel 33:19).

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: "*it was out of Divine grace to man*" - this means grace, favor, and mercy - that the Creator granted man the ability to repent, because according to [strict] reason, "*the soul which sins shall die*" (Yechezkel 18:20) as is the custom for [human] kings of the land (who execute those who rebel). Only that G-d desires in kindness... "*for I do not desire the death of the wicked, says the L-rd G-d, but that he repents and lives*"... and (Yechezkel 33:11) "*Say to them: As I live, says the L-rd G-d, I do not wish for the death of the wicked, but for the wicked to repent of his way so that he may live. Repent, repent of your evil ways, for why should you die?*")

Since tzadikim (righteous people) fall into two categories: (1) those saved from sin and iniquity, (2) those who sinned but repented. Since the vast majority of tzadikim are of the penitent (second type), therefore the psalmist opened with "*How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered*" (Tehilim 32:1), and afterwards spoke of the first type.

And even though, those saved from ever sinning are on a higher level (than the penitent), since every penitent was a tzadik before he sinned, but not every tzadik was a penitent (i.e. the penitent must return to the state of tzadik, but the tzadik does not ever need the state of penitent to become a tzadik, therefore he is greater - ML). And David said of them "*How blessed is the man to whom the L-ord does not count in him iniquity*" (Tehilim 32:2), and the reason he

mentioned them second is because they are few to be found in every generation, as written: "If You, L-ord, should mark iniquities, O L-ord, who could stand?" (Tehilim 130:3), and "For there is not a just man on earth who does good and sins not" (Koheles 7:20), and "for (there is) no man who does not sin" (Melachim 8:46).

Because of this our Rabbis instituted in the beginning of our (Amida) prayers the matter of repentance and forgiveness in saying "*harotze biteshuva*" (who desires repentance), and "*hamarbe lisloach*" (who abundantly forgives).

It is now proper for us to clarify ten matters on the subject of repentance:

1. What is repentance?
2. What are its parts?
3. What are the prerequisites of repentance?
4. An explanation of its essential elements.
5. the conditions for each element.
6. which things stir a man to repent?
7. which things are detrimental to repentance?
8. is the penitent equal to the tzadik who never sinned?
9. if it is possible to repent of every sin or not?
10. strategy to be adopted by one for whom repentance is difficult

In this, we will complete the various kinds of repentance and its obligations, by the fulfillment of which, with G-d's help, we hope to obtain forgiveness of our transgressions.

*** CHAPTER 1 ***

- *What is repentance*

With regard to what is repentance, I say that repentance means that a man makes himself fit to resume the service of the Creator after he went out of it and transgressed against it, and to restore what he lost in it. This could be due to:

(*Pas Lechem*: "after he went out of it" - out of the good.
"and transgressed against it" - committed the bad
"and to restore what he lost in it" - the mitzvot that were in his power to do)

* ignorance of G-d and of the matters of serving Him.

(*Tov Halevanon*: "ignorance of G-d" - that he does not realize G-d's awesome greatness, hence he does not care about His commandments. Also, he does not know well the service, how and with what to serve Him.)

* his evil inclination had overpowered his understanding

* neglect of his duties towards G-d

(*Manoach Halevavos*: i.e. it is not due to "ignorance of G-d...", but rather due to not being mindful to watch over, think, and contemplate his duties...)

* associating with bad company who entice him to sin,

or other similar reasons, as the wise man said: "*My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent*" (Mishlei 1:10), and "*My son, fear the L-ord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change*" (Mishlei 24:21).

The withdrawing out of the service of G-d occurs in two ways, whether one (1) abandons and ignores what the Creator commanded us to do, or (2) one does what He warned us not to do, with the intent to rebel against his Creator.

If his withdrawing out of the service consists only in abandoning what the Creator commanded to do (but not in doing what He warned against), then the repentance for his shortcomings will be to exert himself in the proper acts and to cling to the roots of repentance which I will clarify in this gate.

If his withdrawing consisted of doing what the Creator warned against, the way to make up his failing will be in

guarding from returning to do any form of this act, to endeavor to do its opposite, and to cling to the roots and conditions of repentance which I will clarify in this gate with G-d's help.

An analogy of this with regard to natural matters. A man became sick due to poor diet, whether because he refrained from eating food which promotes good health or because he ate something damaging to him and so ruined his health.

When his illness is due to starving himself from proper food, the way to bring him back to good health is for him to eat a larger amount than normal of proper foods, compatible with his nature, until he returns to proper balance. After he returns to his original balance, he can reduce his diet to normal amounts.

If his illness was due to habitually eating food harmful to him (ex. too much spicy food), the way of his healing would be to abstain from this food or others similar, and to habitually eat foods of an opposite nature and composition (ex. non spicy), until he returns to his original state. When his health is restored and he reaches a balanced state, he can eat foods midway both types of nature and composition (mildly spicy), and the verse already compares moral iniquities to bad food as written: *"But every one shall die for his own iniquity. He who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge"* (Yirmiya 31:29).

*** CHAPTER 2 ***

- *What are its parts*

There are three kinds of repentance:

(1) One who repents because he does not have an opportunity (or the means) to repeat the transgression. But when he does find the opportunity, his evil inclination overpowers his understanding and he does not refrain from it. After he finishes the deed, he realizes the shamefulness of his act and regrets what he did. This person repented with his mouth but not with his heart, with his lips but not with his deeds, and he is guilty and deserving of the punishment of the Creator. Of such a person, it is written: *"Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely,... And come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My Name, and say, 'We are saved'...? Has this house, which is called by My Name, become a cave of thieves in your eyes?..."* (Yirmiya 7:9).

(*Pas Lechem*: Behold they regretted temporarily and prayed to be saved, but G-d scorns them for this in saying *"Has this house... become a cave of thieves in your eyes?"*. The intent is that the thieves are bandits who hold up travelers on the road. They stay in a concealed cave and from there run and plunder travelers. But when they sense a large crowd approaching them (to arrest them), and from far they sense that people are coming and searching for them - then they panic and flee swiftly to their hiding place. When they reach the cave and saved their necks, and call out *"we are saved"*. Then most of them regret their deeds in seeing how close they are to mortal danger. But afterwards after some time has passed, when their hearts' agitation and arousal has calmed down, they return to their villainous work. And all their days are back and forth.

Tov Halevanon: For example, one who transgresses in forbidden relations, after he finishes the deed and his desire and lust have passed, he feels the shame and disgrace of his transgression and regrets it, as the sages said: "the wicked are full of regret" (see Shevet Musar Chapt.25))

(2) One who repents in his heart and in deed. His understanding stands up to his evil inclination. He trains himself to discipline his inward being, and fight its lusts until he defeats it and restrains it from what is hateful to the Creator. But his inner being always desires to draw him to the opposite of the service of G-d, and longs to do transgressions. He exerts himself to restrain it. Sometimes he defeats it, sometimes it defeats him. This person is not complete in the way of repentance. It will not secure an atonement, until he renounces the sins completely, as written: *"Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be atoned for, and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin: when he makes all the stones of the altars like chalkstones crushed to pieces, no Asherim or incense altars will remain standing"* (Yeshaya 27:9).

(*Pas Lechem*: i.e. that he is assured that he will not return to his folly under any circumstances, namely, after he destroyed the remnants of his abominations and no trace of them remains.)

(3) A man who has fulfilled all the conditions of repentance (as will be explained later), which means, has strengthened his intellect over his lusts, and habituated himself in making a personal accounting (see gate#8), fears his Creator (His punishment - *PL*), is in awe of Him (of His greatness - *PL*), contemplates the greatness of his sin and error, recognizes the infinite greatness of the One who he rebelled against and He whose word he transgressed,

places his sins always before his eyes, regrets them and prays for forgiveness on them all the days of his life, until his final end comes - to the Creator, this person is worthy of being spared.

(Translator: *"places his sins always before his eyes"*, this is not in order to be sad over his sins, but rather in order to stay humble - Igeret HaTeshuva, Tanya)

*** CHAPTER 3 ***

- *What a man needs to know to repent*

What are the prerequisites of repentance? I say on this, to be effective, repentance must be preceded by first understanding seven things:

(1) The penitent must understand clearly that he did a disgraceful act. Because, if this is not clear to him, and he is in doubt or ignorant of it, it is not possible for him to regret it and seek forgiveness for it, as written: *"For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me"* (Tehilim 51:5)

(*Tov Halevanon*: i.e. that he knows clearly that he did these things. This is to exclude where he is in doubt, that he does not clearly remember the act or the disgracefulness of it, or that he only remembers it partially...

Marpe Lenefesh: I deemed proper to quote from the Orchot Tzadikim who brought the *"seven things"* of this book and expanded on them a bit. From his words the author's words will be properly understood. Here is the excerpt from Shar Teshuva there: After a man deliberates on repenting, he will not be able to do a complete repentance unless he puts to heart seven things. The first: That one knows and recognizes all of his actions... know my son that most people are not careful about devarim betalim (useless chatter), nor from looking at women and speaking to them without needing to. They are also not careful to pray with kavana (intent), and to speak [mundane things] in a synagogue, and from frivolity (sechok and kalut rosh), nor from giving tzedaka to those fitting to receive... and talmud torah, and likewise from jealousy, hatred, slander, arrogance, anger, and all the [bad] traits mentioned in this book...)

(2) He must understand the gravity of his sin and its disgracefulness, since if it is not clear to him that his deed was evil, he will not regret it nor take on the conditions of repentance for it. He will imagine that his act is like unintentional and that he will easily be able to justify himself, as written: *"But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults"* (Tehilim 19:13).

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: Even if he knows the transgressions he committed, he will not regret them if he is not certain of the evilness of what he did. If he thinks "so what if I benefited from this world without a beracha, or if I wasted time for torah study, it is not so bad?" He who thinks thus will not regret nor repent wholeheartedly. Rather one must think: "there is nothing worse in the world than one who doesn't care about the orders of the lofty King...")

(3) That he realizes the punishment the act obligates (the inevitable punishment which is already prepared for his transgression - TL). Because, if he does not know this, necessity does not bring him to regret it. But, if it is clear to him that he will be punished for it, he will regret it afterwards and seek forgiveness, as written: *"For after my return I have completely changed my mind, and after I had been brought to know myself (the punishments waiting for me) I smote upon my thigh"* (Yirmiyahu 31:18), and *"My flesh bristles from fright of You, and I dread Your judgments"* (Tehillim 119:120).

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: The penitent must know and believe from the depths of his heart that there are harsh and bitter retributions and punishments in the next world for the sins he committed. If he does not know this, he will not care to repent. But after the inevitability of the punishment is clear to him, then he will repent and regret it and beseech forgiveness for it from G-d.)

(4) He must realize that his sin is pending [retribution] and inscribed in the book of his sins. It is not subject to being neglected, forgotten, or overlooked, as written: *"Is it not laid up in store with Me, sealed up among My treasures?"* (Devarim 32:34), and *"By the hand of every man He seals so that every man should know His deed"* (Iyov 37:7). Because if one thinks that since he has not been punished for it until now, therefore the sin is discarded and not

pending for him, then he will not regret it nor seek forgiveness for it, as written "*Because the sentence of an evil deed is not executed swiftly; therefore, the hearts of men are fully set in them to do evil*" (Koheles 8:11).

(*Tov Halevanon*: "his sin is pending" - the sin is held for him. Justice demands that he be punished immediately for it, only that G-d withholds the punishment and waits until he repents or until his measure is up.)

(5) He must be fully convinced that repentance is the remedy for his illness, and the road to recovery from his evil deed and disgraceful conduct, and through it he will correct his error and recover what he had lost. Because if this is not clear to him, he will despair from obtaining the Creator's atonement and mercies, and he will not seek forgiveness for past wickedness, as written "*So have you spoken, saying: For our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and because of them we are melting away, so how should we then live?*" (Yechezkel 33:10), and they were answered by the Creator through His prophet: "*Say to them: As I live, says the L-ord G-d, I do not wish for the death of the wicked, [but for the wicked to repent of his way so that he may live. Repent, repent of your evil ways, for why should you die, O house of Israel]*" (Yechezkel 33:11).

(*Pas Lechem*: "the remedy for his illness and the road to healing" - Repentance is the remedy for the illnesses of the soul and it is the "road" which leads to "healing" from his evil deeds, i.e. to remove the acquired evil, which he acquired in his nature through habitual practice - namely, the longing to do evil, - that he will no longer do evil deeds in the future. These two expressions correspond to regret and abandonment of the evil deed. Understand this.)

(6) He must make a spiritual accounting (see Gate#8) with himself on the kindness the Creator already bestowed on him, and how he had rebelled against Him instead of being grateful for them. He should weigh the punishment of the sin in the next world against the pleasure (he got from the sin in this world), and the sweet bliss of the reward for good deeds he will get in the next world against the suffering he has [here] in doing them, as our sages taught: "*Consider the loss from doing a mitzvah against its reward and the gain from doing a sin against the loss it involves*" (Avos 2:1).

(7) He must strengthen himself greatly to be able to bear the suffering from refraining to do the evil he had been addicted to do, and firmly resolve inwardly and outwardly to renounce it, as written "*And tear your hearts, and not your garments*" (Yoel 2:13).

Only if these seven things are in the mind of the sinner, can repentance from his sins be effective.

*** CHAPTER 4 ***

its essential components

The essential components of repentance are four:

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: i.e. if he is not perfect in these four components and conditions of repentance, he is still outside, and there is a breach in his repentance, as mentioned earlier.)

1. That he should regret the past sins he committed.

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: that he regrets having transgressed the command of G-d.)

2. That he abandon and turn away from them.

3. That he confess them and beseech forgiveness for having committed them.

4. That he take on himself with heart and soul not to repeat them.

(*Tov Halevanon*: To never repeat them and to not desire them in his heart.
Manoach Halevavos: Even though he already said in #2 to abandon them. There the explanation is to abandon them now, but it is still possible that after some time he will return to doing them. Therefore, he added this 4th component "*to take on himself...*")

1. Regret is a sign that the sin is disgraceful in his eyes, as written: "*He who knows will return and regret and leave a blessing behind him*" (Yoel 2:14). It is said of one who persists in his sins for a long time: "*no man repented himself*"

of his wickedness" (Yirmiyahu 8:6). We ourselves can see in relationships between human beings, that when one who wronged his fellow shows regret for having wronged him, this will be the strongest factor for his fellow's granting him forgiveness.

2. Abandonment (of sin) is a sign of his firm faith in reward and punishment, as written: *"The wicked shall give up his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts, and let him return to the L-ord, who shall have mercy upon him, and to our G-d, for He abundantly pardons"* (Yeshaya 55:7). Of one who persists in his [evil] ways for a long time, the prophet says: *"For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and smote him, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart"* (Yeshaya 57:17). Similarly we can observe among human beings, that if one has wronged his fellow, and along with expressing regret, ceases to wrong him, then it will be proper to forgive him and overlook the misdeed.

3. Beseeking forgiveness demonstrates submission and humility before G-d, and confession of one's sin is a ground for forgiveness, as written: *"he who confesses and renounces them will obtain mercy"* (Mishlei 28:13). Regarding the opposite of this, it is said: *"[Yet you say, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me.] Behold, I will contend with you, because you say, I have not sinned"* (Yirmiyahu 2:35), and *"he that conceals his transgressions will not succeed"* (Mishlei 28:13). Similarly we can observe among human beings, that if one wrongs his fellow, and afterwards humbles himself towards him, and admits that he sinned against him and wronged him and beseeches forgiveness from him, and the fellow recognizes that he truly regrets the wrong he committed, the fellow will not refrain from forgiving him and will overlook the wrong-doing, and the grudge in his heart against him will be removed.

4. The resolution not to repeat [the sin] reflects his understanding of the wickedness of his deed and the gravity of his sin, as written *"If I have committed iniquity, I will do no more"* (Iyov 34:32), and *"Assyria shall not save us... nor will we say any longer to the work of our hands, you are our gods"* (Hoshea 14:4). Of one who acts in the opposite manner, it is written: *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may you also do good, that are accustomed to doing evil"* (Yirmiya 13:23). And similarly we can observe among human beings that when one who wronged his fellow takes on himself not to wrong him again, and demonstrates that he regrets and abandons his sin and confesses it, this will complete the grounds which lead to forgiveness and removal of his iniquity, and cancelling the punishment from him.

When the penitent combines these four components along with their conditions, which we will clarify [next chapter], the Creator will forgive the sinner his iniquity, and overlook his transgression. If it is a sin of the type which it is written: *"he will not hold him guiltless"* (Shmos 20:7), such as a false oath or adultery, the Creator will reduce his punishment in this world (to atone for his sin - ML) and show him grace in the Olam Haba (afterlife), and he will be included in the group of tzadikim (righteous), as written *"And a redeemer shall come to Zion, and to those who repent of transgression in Jacob, says the L-ord"* (Yeshaya 59:20), and *"If you return, O Israel, says the L-ord, to Me you shall return"* (Yirmiya 4:1), and *"thus says the L-ord, If you return, then will I bring you again, and you shall stand before Me"* (Yirmiya 15:19).

*** CHAPTER 5 ***

the conditions for each component

The conditions of the (four) essential components of repentance are exceedingly numerous. I will only mention, of them, twenty conditions. Hence we will clarify five conditions for each of the four components. Through these conditions, the corresponding components will be complete.

(Tov Halevanon: The essential components are general principles, while the conditions are branches of them.)

The conditions are exceedingly numerous since every penitent needs many tikunim (rectifications) according to the nature of the sin, the nature of the sinner, and the factors which led him to sin.)

Among the conditions for regret, the following five:

(1) To fear the imminent punishment of the Creator for the sins he already committed, and that his remorse intensifies due to this, as written *"Give glory to the L-ord your God, before He causes darkness, [and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while you look for light, He turns it into the shadow of death, and makes it to deep gloom]"* (Yirmiya 13:16). (i.e. before troubles dim his eyes or that death strikes him - TL)

(Tov Halevanon: *"the imminent punishment"* - the sinner should imagine as if a sword is drawn out for him, and he is being taken immediately to the execution platform to be punished for his crimes.)

(2) He should be broken hearted and humbled before G-d due to his sins, as written *"If My people, upon whom My Name is called, will humble themselves [and pray and seek My presence and repent of their evil ways, then I shall hear from heaven and forgive their sin...]"* (Divrei Hayamim II 7:14).

| (*Pas Lechem*: i.e. besides fear of punishment, through reflecting in his heart on G-d's greatness - he will regret. This is yirat haromemut [fear of G-d's greatness. #1 previously was fear of punishment.]

(3) He should change his clothing and adornments and show signs of remorse in his speech in his eating, and in all of his conducts, as written *"Because of this, gird yourselves with sackcloth, lament and wail [for the fierce anger of the L-ord has not turned back from us]"* (Yirmiya 4:8), and *"Let man and beast be covered with sackcloth [and cry mightily unto G-d, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the oppression that is in their hands]"* (Yona 3:8).

(4) By tears, lamentations, and mourning, the penitent should express remorse for the sin he had committed, as written *"Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they did not keep Your commandments"* (Tehilim 119:136), and *"Let the priests, the ministers of the L-ord, weep between the porch and the altar"* (Yoel 2:17)

| (*Marpe Lenefesh*: Because the eyes and the heart are the gates of sin - "The eye sees, and the heart desires, and then the body commits the deed" (Bamidbar Rabba). And the wise man wrote (Sefer Chasidim siman 9): "nothing stops desire like closing of the eyes")

(5) He should rebuke his soul and inwardly shame it for not having fulfilled his obligations to the exalted Creator, as written *"And tear your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the L-ord your G-d"* (Yoel 2:13).

| (*Tov Halevanon*: To shame and humiliate his soul for ingraining in his heart lusts and bad thoughts. *"And tear your hearts"* - to abstain from his soul's lusts, and to straighten the crookedness of his heart [by shaming and rebuking himself, etc.]

The conditions for renouncing (of sin) are also five, as follows:

(1) Abandonment of everything the Creator has warned against, as written *"Hate the evil and love the good"* (Amos 5:15), and *"...guards his hand from doing any evil"* (Yeshaya 56:2), and *"let the wicked abandon his way"* (Yeshaya 55:7).

| (*Tov Halevanon*: To completely renounce everything the Creator has prohibited, and to remove desire for them from his heart, and not yearn for them at all, just like one does not yearn for something very remote from him. For example, one who has a hundred silver coins will certainly not lust for 1 million gold coins because it seems unattainable to him. How much more so, to not desire for something the Creator has prohibited which should seem even more remote.)

(2) Abstaining from what is permitted if it might lead to what is forbidden in cases where one is in doubt whether they are permitted or forbidden. It is said of some of the pious, that they would refrain from seventy kinds of permitted things out of fear of taking one kind that is forbidden. This is like the Rabbinic fences which our sages commanded us, in saying *"make fences for the torah"* (Avos 1:1).

(3) Abandonment of sin while one has the ability and opportunity to repeat it, and that he refrains from doing it only out of fear of the punishment of the Creator, as written *"My flesh bristles from fright of You, and I dread Your judgments"* (Tehilim 119:120)

(4) That one abandons sin out of a feeling of shame from the Creator, and not out of fear of human beings or because one hopes for some benefit from them, or out of being ashamed of them. He should not be like those which the verse speaks of: *"with their lips they honor Me, but their heart is far away from Me. their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote"* (Yeshaya 29:13), and *"Yehoash did what was proper in the eyes of the L-rd all the days that Yehoyada the priest instructed him"* (Melachim II 12:3, which implies after the death of Yehoyada, his teacher, he stopped doing what was proper).

(5) That one abandons the evil, a permanent abandonment - to not enter in his heart to repeat it. He should resolve in his heart and say in speech what the pious man said: *"if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more"* (Iyov 34:32).

The conditions for beseeching forgiveness are also five:

(1) The penitent should confess his sins, and realize their enormity in his eyes and in his heart, as written *"For our transgressions against You are many, and our sins have testified against us"* (Yeshaya 59:12).

| (*Tov Halevanon: "realize their enormity"* - when he compares his puniness and insignificance relative to the loftiness of the King of kings, the holy One, blessed be He, which he transgressed against.)

(2) That he recalls them always, and places them before him, opposite his face, as written *"For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me"* (Tehilim 51:5).

(3) He should fast by day and pray at night, the time when his mind is free and he is not distracted by secular matters, as written *"Arise, cry out in the night, [.. Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the L-ord]"* (Eicha 2:19). I will later explain the greatness of prayer at night, with G-d's help (Gate 10 chapter 6).

(4) That one pleads to G-d and constantly beseeches Him to atone for his sins, forgive him, and accept his repentance, as written *"Therefore, let every one who is pious pray to You at the time that You are found"* (Tehilim 32:6), and *"I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the L-ord'; And You forgave the guilt of my sin"* (Tehilim 32:5).

(5) That one labors and exerts himself to warn other people of sins similar to his, and arouse them to fear the punishments incurred [by the sins], and remind them to repent from them, as written *"Perhaps G-d will turn and relent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"* (Yona 3:9), and *"I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will return to You"* (Tehilim 51:15).

The conditions for resolving to not repeat what the Creator warned against are also five:

(1) To weigh an immediate pleasure which is fleeting and mixed (with pain - TL) against a future, constant and everlasting pleasure, pure with no darkness and without any mixture of pain. And to weigh an immediate, fleeting pain (in doing a mitzvah or in breaking his lust for a sin - ML), which is without permanence, against a future pain, which is everlasting and without interruption.

Regarding the pleasure (in the afterlife), it is written: *"And when you see this, your heart shall rejoice"* (Yeshaya 66:14), and *"the sun of mercy shall rise with healing in its wings for you who fear My Name. Then will you go forth and be rich as fatted calves"* (Malachi 3:20), while regarding the pain it is written: *"And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me: for their worm shall not die (i.e. everlasting - TL), neither shall their fire ever be quenched (i.e. without interruption - TL); [and they shall be an eternal abhorrence unto all flesh]"* (Yeshaya 66:24), and *"For lo, the day comes, that shall burn like a furnace, and all the audacious sinners and all the perpetrators of wickedness shall be stubble. And the sun that comes shall burn them up so that it will leave them neither root nor branch, says the L-ord of Hosts"* (Malachi 3:19). When the sinner puts this matter to heart, he will deem it proper to take on himself not to repeat his sin.

(2) He should put to heart the coming of his day of death, when the Creator will be furious on him for having neglected his duties, as written *"Now who can endure the day of His coming (the great day of judgment - TL), and who will stand when He appears, for He will be like a blazing fire that refines metal"* (Malachi 3:2). If he puts this to heart, he is bound to fear His punishment, and will resolve strongly not to repeat what will arouse the wrath of the Creator on him.

(3) He should put to heart the days during which he turned away from G-d, and did not care about His service, in spite of His continuous goodness towards him during then, as written: *"For of old I broke your yoke, I tore open your yoke-bands, and you said, 'I will not pass'"* (Yirmiya 2:20), the explanation of *"I will not pass"* is: *"I will not take on Your service, and will not enter Your covenant"*, as if he said *"I will not pass in Your covenant"*, similar to the matter *"to pass you over the covenant of the L-rd your G-d"* (Devarim 29:11).

(4) He should return stolen things and refrain from sin, and from doing harm to any human being, as written: *"The wicked man shall return the pledge, he will repay the theft; [in the statutes of life he walked, not to commit injustice - he will surely live, he will not die]"* (Yechezkel 33:15), and *"If iniquity be in your hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in your tents; For then shall you lift up your face without shame"* (Iyov 11:14).

| (*Pas Lechem: "(1) return stolen things, (2) refrain from sin, and (3) from doing harm to any human being"* - he specified three expressions corresponding to the teaching in the talmud (Bava Basra 165a) "most are guilty of theft, few in forbidden relations, and all in evil speech", the latter's intent is

(5) His mind should reflect on the greatness of the Creator, whose word he rebelled against - casting off the yoke of His service (positive commandments), and removing the ropes of His torah (negative commandments), and one should rebuke himself and shame himself for this, as written *"Is this how you repay the L-ord, [you disgraceful, unwise people?! Is He not your Father, your Master? He has made you and established you]"* (Devarim 32:6), and *"Will you not fear Me? says the L-ord, or, do you not quake from before Me, for I made sand a boundary for the sea, an everlasting ordinance, which it cannot pass"* (Yirmiya 5:22).

(*Pas Lechem: "Is this how you repay the L-ord"* - corresponding to reflecting on His greatness, *"you disgraceful, unwise people"*, corresponding to rebuking and shaming oneself, *"is He not your Father, your Master? He has made you.."* to clarify the matter in the way of debating [with oneself]. *"Will you not fear Me?"* - also corresponds to reflecting on His greatness.)

In this, we have completed the requirements of repentance.

*** CHAPTER 6 ***

which things stir a man to repent

The stirring of a person to repentance occurs through one of four ways:

(1) It is stirred by a person's strengthening himself in the recognition of G-d (His greatness -PL), reflecting on the constant goodness he receives, and realizing of what is his duty in exchange for it of the service [of G-d], of observing His commandments and of refraining from what He prohibited.

He is like a slave who ran away from his master and then when he reflects on the good his master bestowed on him, he will return to him of his own free will to beseech his forgiveness for rebelling against him and fleeing from his service. This kind of slave has chosen the right way and understands the path which leads to his salvation (from punishment) - it is proper to forgive him and accept him.

Of (a penitent) like him it is said: *"If you return, O Israel, says the L-rd, to Me, you shall return, and if you remove your abominations from My sight and will not wander; And you will swear by My Name in truth and in justice and in righteousness, nations will bless themselves with you and boast about you"* (Yirmiya 4:1)

The explanation is as follows: *"If you repent willingly before the punishment comes on you, I will accept your repentance, and choose you for My service, and if you remove your abominations from My face and you don't move and you don't run away from My service, and you swear in My name in truth, and your heart will faithfully return to Me, if you repent with all the conditions (i.e. remove abominations of your own free will, etc - TL) the nations will bless and praise themselves that: '(would that it were that) we should be like you"*.

It is also said: *"return to Me and I will return to you"* (Malachi 3:7).

(2) When the Creator rebukes and humiliates him on his evil ways and deeds, whether through the prophet of his generation, if he lives in the era of prophecy, or from the Torah of G-d (i.e. the 2 strong rebukes there [in parsha Bechukotai and Ki Tavo], and the other places of rebuke - PL), or through a Rabbi who preaches to him on the service of G-d. And this is grounds for a charge by G-d against all of humanity, since no generation is ever without such a guide, as our sages said "Before the sun of Moshe Rabeinu has set (his death), the sun of Yehoshua his disciple had risen, before the sun of Eli set, the sun of Samuel rose, before the sun of Elijah set, the sun of Elisha rose. The day Rabbi Akiva died, Rabbi HaKadosh was born" (Kidushin 72b), and in this way it can be found in every generation and in every land, there is never an absence of a preacher who calls to G-d and His service, and teaches His torah.

A penitent stirred this way is like a slave who ran away from the service of his master. He then met another slave who was faithful to his master, who rebuked him for fleeing from his master, and advised him to return, and assured him that the master will forgive him. He reminded him of the abundant goodness and kindness that he had received. The slave returned and humbled himself to his master.

(3) When one observes the trials and severe punishments the Creator meted out to a person who followed the path he himself is following, in leaving G-d's service, and he will be reproved by it and return to G-d because he fears G-d's punishment and severe retribution. He is like a slave who ran away from his master. When he heard the punishment another slave like him received for running away, he became reproved by it and returned to his master pleading him to forgive him and pardon his sin before his punishment comes. Thus, the verse says: *"And let the land*

(4) When the punishment of the Creator comes on him, in the form of some type of tribulation. Since he sensed (the message early), he awakened and got up from his slumber, and repented to G-d from his sin. He is like a slave who ran away from his master, and the master dispatched an emissary to punish him and beat him for running away from his service. When the emissary reached him, he ran back to his master, confessing his sin and seeking forgiveness. On one like him, it is said: "when your fear comes like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind; when trouble and straits come upon you; then they will call Me, but I will not answer; [they shall seek Me, but they shall not find Me; Because they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the L-ord;]" (Mishlei 1:27), and "And when he was distressed, he entreated the L-ord his G-d, and he humbled himself greatly before the G-d of his fathers" (Divrei Hayamim II 33:12).

(*Tov Halevanon*: Even though repentance always helps, even after the punishment comes, and even in lower levels than this, but that is from the aspect of the kindness of G-d, whereas this verse is referring to the aspect of "wisdom" [i.e. strict justice]...)

The most successful (in being spared from punishment - *PL*) and most accepted (for being considered henceforth a faithful servant - *PL*) is the one who repented to G-d in the first case (on his own). Below him in success and acceptance is the second case: he who did not repent until being alarmed by the Creator's rebuke; below them in success and acceptance is the one who did not repent until punishment inflicts those around him. Below him in acceptance and return is he who did not repent until punishment was inflicted on him and made him suffer.

(*Pas Lechem*: Here the author does not use the term "success", which refers to being spared from punishment, since behold he was already inflicted with punishment, he suffered, and was purged of his sin. For this the author substituted the term "success" with "return", which means that he heals from the wounds of his punishment and recovers to his former state.)

He is the furthest of the penitent and the least likely that G-d will accept his repentance and pardon his sin unless he repents to G-d, and demonstrates regret, abandonment, beseeching forgiveness in heart, speech, and movements, to an extent that will make him fitting to be pardoned and to accept his repentance and to overlook his sin.

(*Pas Lechem*: the other penitents, have their repentance accepted immediately, when they start to repent, unlike this penitent who is not accepted and pardoned until he fulfills all the conditions of repentance, and then he will be accepted by the blessed Creator.)

*** CHAPTER 7 ***

things detrimental to repentance

The things detrimental to repentance are very numerous. I have already mentioned most of them previously (these are all the things detrimental to wholehearted devotion to God and everything mentioned in Chapter 4 of Gate #5 - *TL*). Some additional detrimental things: complacency in doing the sin, which means persisting in doing the sin, and delaying to [resolve to - *PL*] abandon it. As long as this condition continues, it is not possible to repent.

There is a saying: "no sin is small if done persistently, and no sin is big if one beseeches forgiveness for it". The explanation: doing a sin persistently reflects one's disregard for the word of G-d, and that he regards His commandment and prohibition lightly, and so invites on himself punishment. Of such a person, it is said: "But if a person should act highhandedly, whether he is a native born or a proselyte, he is blaspheming the L-ord, [and that soul shall be cut off from among its people]" (Bamidbar 15:30).

Furthermore, persistence in sin, even though it is small, it continuously grows by his repeating it. While, for a big sin, when its owner beseeches forgiveness for it, and abandons it out of fear of G-d, it gradually reduces and shrinks until it is entirely erased from one's book of sins, and its owner is purged from it with repentance.

(*Tov Halevanon*: For the biggest of sins, if he abandons it and beseeches forgiveness, it is not considered anything, whereas even the smallest of sins, when repeated many times, is considered extremely big.
"invites on himself punishment" - invites death on himself.

Pas Lechem: Even though the sin itself is small, nevertheless, the disregard of the Creator's honor which it demonstrates is big.)

You can see regarding a strand of silk how strong it becomes when it is doubled over many times, though it is made up of the weakest of material, namely the saliva of the silkworm. Consider the huge rope of boats. After a long time of use, the rope gradually wears out until it eventually breaks and the material returns to being the weakest of the weak.

Similarly for the matter of the smallness or largeness of sins, with regard to repeating them frequently or seeking forgiveness on them. Therefore, the verse compared them to a rope as written: "*Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes*" (Yeshaya 5:18).

It was already said: "do not look at the minuteness of what you committed, but rather look at the [infinite] greatness of He who you sin against."

(*Tov Halevanon*: i.e. even for the smallest of sins, if you persist in it, you are being light with the command and prohibition of the Creator. Know with Whom you are being light.)

Do not rejoice that others cannot recognize your hidden bad deeds, but rather it is proper to mourn because the Creator knows that which you are concealing, sees your hidden thoughts and revealed acts, and that He will remind you of them, more than you will remember of them, because you forget, but He does not forget. You will ignore them, but He will not ignore them, as written: "*Behold, it is written before Me [I will not keep silent, but will repay, even repay into their bosom]*" (Yeshaya 65:6), "*The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond*" (Yirmiya 17:1).

(*Tov Halevanon*: "but rather it is proper to mourn" - since only the Creator knows of them, because then you will receive full punishment. For if people knew of them and shamed you for them, your punishment will already be reduced. This is similar to what the author wrote earlier in Gate#5 chapter 5 regarding when the evil inclination comes from the side of arrogance.)

Another detrimental thing: To return to the sin, after completing all the conditions of repentance from it, as written in its chapter: "*the word which came to Yirmiyahu...to proclaim freedom, that every man should let his manservant and every man his maidservant..*" (Yirmiya 34:8), and the rest of the matter.

Another detrimental thing also: That one assures himself that he will repent in his later years, and thinks he will refrain from sins after he is satisfied and has obtained his desires in them. He is like one trying to cheat G-d. Regarding him, the sages said: "one who says: 'I will sin then repent, I will sin then repent', will be prevented from doing repentance" (Yoma 85b).

In the Tochecha (rebuke) section I wrote at the end of this book, (I wrote): "O my soul, prepare many provisions, do not be scant while you are still alive and have the opportunity, because the journey before you (after death - TL) is exceedingly long (and you need much provisions for such a long journey - TL). Do not say tomorrow I will take provisions, because the day is closing and you don't know what the day may bring. Realize that yesterday will never return and all that you did was weighed, written, and accounted for. Don't say tomorrow I will do my duty, because the day of death is hidden from every living creature. Hasten to do every day's portion, because like a bird is driven from its nest, so too a man is driven from his place".

Another detrimental thing: That the penitent repents on part of his sins but continues in others. For example, he stopped from the sins between man and G-d, and repented on them, but did not stop from what is between himself and other men, such as theft, ona'a (overcharging money), or the like. On this it was said: "*if iniquity is in your hands - distance it far away*" (Iyov 11:14). And our sages said: "R. Adda b. Ahaba said: One who has sinned and confessed his sin but does not repent may be compared to a man holding an [spiritually] unclean reptile in his hand. For although he may immerse himself in all the waters of the world his immersion is of no avail unto him; but if he throws it away from his hand, then as soon as he immerses himself, immediately his immersion becomes effective, as it is said: "one who confesses and abandons them shall obtain mercy" (Taanis 16a).

The detrimental things we mentioned in previous gates of this book, all of them are also detrimental to repentance, and there is no need to repeat them in this gate.

the penitent and the tzadik

If the penitent is equal to the tzadik (righteous person). On this I say: (1) sometimes a penitent is equal after repentance to the tzadik who never sinned, (2) sometimes he is greater than the tzadik, and (3) sometimes the tzadik is greater than him even though he repented.

The explanation of the first case: That the lacking was in a positive commandment which does not carry the punishment of Karet (spiritual excision), such as tzitzit, lulav, sukka, or the like. When the person repents on them in his heart and in speech, and exerts himself to fulfill them, and does not repeat his neglect to do them, the Creator will forgive him, and he will be equal to the tzadik who never sinned in them. On such a penitent, it is said: "one who repents from a sin is as if he never sinned", and our sages said of them: (Yoma 86a) "one who transgressed a positive commandment which does not incur Karet (spiritual excision) and repented - he is forgiven right away, as written: 'return to Me and I will return to you' (Malachi 3:7)".

For the second case, where the penitent becomes greater than the tzadik, the explanation is that the penitent committed a minor sin of the negative commandments, such as one which does not carry the punishment of Karet, and afterwards fully repents with all the conditions of repentance. He places his sin before him and opposite his face, and always beseeches for forgiveness of it. He feels full of shame before the Creator, his heart penetrated by the fear of the punishment, his spirit is broken (i.e. his lusts - *PL*). He always submits and humbles himself before G-d, and the sin becomes a cause for his submission and for his endeavoring to fulfill his debts to the Creator. He does not become haughty in the least for his good deeds and they do not amount to much in his eyes. He does not glorify himself in it and guards from stumbling for the rest of his life - such a sinner, is the one who is greater than the tzadik who never sinned this sin or others like it. For the tzadik is not assured that his heart will not become proud and haughty for his deeds. It was said that "sometimes a sin is more useful to the penitent than all the righteous deeds of the tzadik, and sometimes a good deed damages the tzadik more than all the sins of the penitent". This applies when the tzadik turns his heart away from submission and grows pride, flattery (hypocrisy), and love of praise.

One of the righteous would say to his students: "if you were completely without any sins, I would be afraid for you, on what is worse than sin", they said, "what is worse than sin?" He answered, "pride and flattery". Regarding a penitent like this, our Sages said: "In the place where the penitent stands, the perfectly righteous cannot stand" (Berachos 34b).

(*Pas Lechem: "pride and flattery"* - that he becomes proud of his deeds, even though in the beginning he did them l'shem shamayim (wholeheartedly to G-d). Through this he will come to the trait of flattery, to do it from the beginning hypocritically - to appear honorable and important in the hearts of those who see him. After this, he will love and endeavor that others praise him in speech.)

For the third case, (where the tzadik is greater than the penitent), this is where the penitent transgressed big sins of the negative commandments which carry the punishment of death by Beit Din or Karet from the heavenly court, such as Chilul H-shem (desecration of G-d's Name - i.e. causing others to sin - *ML*), false oaths, or others like these of the severe sins. The person afterwards repented from his evil path, and fulfilled all the conditions and requirements of repentance. In this case, forgiveness will not be granted until he receives suffering in this world with what he will be able to bear and so be cleansed of his sins. On this kind of penitent our sages said (Yoma 86a): "If he has committed a sin punishable by Karet or death through Beit Din, and repented, suffering cleans him and death completes the atonement, as written 'I shall punish their transgression with a rod, and their iniquity with afflictions' (Tehilim 89:33)", and "*certainly this iniquity shall not be atoned for you until you die*" (Yeshaya 22:14). Without any doubt, the Tzadik who never transgressed these types of sins is greater than the penitent in them.

*** CHAPTER 9 ***

repentance on all sins

Whether or not repentance is effective for all sins, I will answer this question as follows: Sins are of two categories.

(1) Sins between man and G-d only. For example, denying the existence of G-d, bad thoughts, bad interior, transgressing negative commandments which apply to the heart, and many of the commandments on the limbs, where the sinner hurts only himself, and his only sin is to transgress the commandment of G-d.

(2) Sins between man and his fellow. These have matters of oppression and wickedness towards other people, whether to their bodies, possessions or reputation. In these, the sinner combines two forms of affliction: one, for himself in rebelling against G-d and two in afflicting other people.

The sins which are between man and G-d alone, it is possible to repent on them during the whole of his lifetime, whenever he arouses himself from his lacking, and endeavors to turn away from his sin and repent to the Creator.

If possible, it is proper that his repentance from the sin be related to the sin he did. For example, if his sin was in the duties of the heart, such as maintaining a bad heart, evil thoughts, bearing a grudge, jealousy, hatred or the like, the proper repentance for this consists of cultivating a good heart and good thoughts, love of doing good to others, and forgiving them.

If his sin was in the physical limbs, such as eating what the Creator forbade to eat, forbidden relations, transgressing the Sabbath or the festivals, or false oaths, it is proper for his repentance to refer to the particular sinful act and also to the class the act belongs to. All the while, he should have intent of heart towards G-d. (i.e. not to become important in the eyes of human beings - PL)

(*Tov Halevanon*: Regarding each matter, to do whatever is possible. [Example:] For prohibited food, to afflict himself with fasting, with forbidden relations, to guard from [unnecessarily] looking at women or speaking to them, for Sabbath and festivals, to minimize his [useless] speech or strolling on the Sabbath, for swearing falsely, to not swear even for the truth.)

All this is possible for a man during his lifetime, if he lives long enough, and only if his intent is to repent and cleanse his soul of its sin before his Creator. Concerning such a penitent, the wise man said: *"If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, And if you scoff, you alone will bear it"* (Mishlei 9:12).

(*Pas Lechem*: *"if he lives long enough"* - i.e. to not procrastinate his repentance thinking he still has much time to live, since behold, the repentance needs a long time, therefore how can he push it off?)

But for the sins towards both G-d and man, it will be difficult to repent for several reasons:

1. He may not be able to find the person he oppressed, or the person died or moved far away.
2. The oppressor lost the money, and he is not able to return it to the oppressed.
3. Perhaps the oppressed will not forgive him for what he oppressed him or hurt him physically, or spoke badly of him.
4. The oppressor may not know whom he oppressed, or he does not know the amount of money involved. For example, if he oppressed the people of a city or a province, and he does not recognize them, and he does not know the amount of money he took from them wrongfully.
5. The forbidden money was mixed with a much greater amount of permitted money, and he cannot return it without incurring a much greater loss, as our sages said: "One who stole a beam and used it in the building of a palace. Beit Shamai says: 'dismantle the palace and return the beam', Beit Hillel says: 'he can return the value of the beam only, because of the enactment for the penitent' " (Gitin 55a) (which implies it is not a full repentance and it is better to return the beam itself only that there is a [rabbinic] enactment... - TL).
6. That the repentance becomes too difficult for him, such as when a person became accustomed to doing it until the bad deed attached to him and became part of his nature, and it will not be easy for him to abandon it, as written: *"they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity"* (Yirmiya 9:4), and *"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? [then may you also do good, those that are accustomed to doing evil]"* (Yirmiya 13:23).
7. Spilling blood or killing the innocent, whether he killed them directly or whether he caused their deaths through slander, as you know of the matter of Doeg and the city of Kohanim, who caused them to be sentenced to death first through his slander, and later executed them himself, as written: *"Then the king said to Doeg, 'You turn around and attack the priests.' And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen priestly ephod"* (Shmuel 22:18).
8. One who causes his fellow to lose money on account of slander, his repentance does not avail until he makes amends with him, whether by paying him or by beseeching him with words and humbling himself before him to forgive him and pardon his wrong, as written: *"and those who ate the flesh of My people and did flay the skin from upon them...then they shall cry out to the L-ord, but He will not answer them"* (Micha 3:3).

9. One who had forbidden relations (punishable by Kores) and fathers a mamzer (illegitimate child) - the disgrace will never leave, and the wrong cannot be corrected, as written: *"For that is lewdness, and it is iniquity to be punished by the judges; For it is fire; it consumes to destruction"* (Iyov 31:11), and *"They betrayed the L-ord for they begot strange children"* (Hoshea 5:7).

10. One who habituated his tongue to lie and to speak of the faults of others, and to denigrate them. For he cannot remember all of what he said and all those who he spoke about due to the countless words, and forgetting the people he spoke against. It is all guarded against him and recorded in the book of his sins. On him it is said: *"And if he comes to see me, he speaks vanity: his heart gathers iniquity to itself; when he goes abroad, he tells it"* (Tehilim 41:7), and *"When you saw a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers"* (Tehilim 50:18), and the rest of the matter. Behold, the verse equated evil speech with theft and adultery. So too, it is said *"they deceive (corrupt) one another and do not speak the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies, they commit iniquity until they are weary"* (Yirmiya 9:4).

11. One for whom repentance will be extremely hard for him: he who enticed people with a false religion that he invented and influenced them to believe in it. He sinned and caused others to sin, the more people join his false beliefs, the more his sin will increase and be multiplied over, as the sages said: *"Whoever leads the masses in the right path will not come to any sin, but whoever leads the masses astray will not be able to repent for all the wrong he commits.. Yeravam ben Nevat, sinned and caused the multitude to sin, and so the sin of the masses is ascribed to him as it is written (I Kings 15:30) 'Because of the sins of Yeravam that he committed and that he caused Israel to commit.'"* (Avos 5:18)

Included in this last category is one who is capable of bringing others to the good and steer the erring away from evil, but refrains from doing so due to hoping to receive money from them or due to being afraid of them, or being ashamed to rebuke them, and they went off, and he did not teach them the right way, as written: *"if you do not speak to warn the wicked, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; and I will hold you accountable for their blood"* (Yechezkel 33:8).

*** CHAPTER 10 ***

What strategy should be adopted by one for whom repentance is difficult? We will answer this question as follows: One who has transgressed a sin for which repentance is difficult, the particular sin necessarily falls into one of two categories. One, that the sin is between him and G-d. Two, that the sin is between him and his fellow men, such as overcharging, various types of theft and trickery, violence, and oppression.

Whatever category it belongs to, if the repentance is difficult due to one of the factors we previously mentioned (last chapter) which cause repentance to be difficult, then, if the person takes on himself to fulfill the requirements of repentance with all its conditions to the utmost extent that is in his power and ability to do, the Creator will make his repentance easier. He will pardon what is hidden from him and not in his ability to do, and will give him a nearer exit for deliverance from his sin and allow him to absolve himself in this way (as will be explained).

If the sin is in the category of forbidden relations, which we mentioned, for one who fathers from an illicit relation (a mamzer), the Creator will wipe out his descendants (from the mamzer).

If it is from overcharging or theft of money, G-d will give him money to pay back his fellow and appease him so that the latter will forgive him.

If he hurt his fellow physically or damaged his possessions, the Creator will put in his fellow's heart favor and love until he forgives him for his sin towards him, as written: *"When the L-ord favors a person's ways, He will cause even his enemies to make peace with him"* (Mishlei 16:7).

If the oppressed is far away, the Creator will arrange their meeting, and the oppressor will humble himself before the oppressed and will be forgiven by him.

If he doesn't know the number of people he oppressed and the amount of money he took, the Creator will give him the opportunity to spend his money in some kind of public project, such as building a bridge, digging a well to benefit the public, or digging water pits in roads where water is scarce, or other similar things to benefit the public, until the project will serve the one he oppressed and also the one he did not oppress.

If the oppressed died, he should return the money to his heirs. If he hurt him physically or he spoke badly of him, he

should confess at his grave with a minyan of ten Jews and he will be forgiven for his sin, as our sages on this matter said: "And if he had died, he should bring ten Jews and to stand by his grave and say: I have sinned against the L-ord, the G-d of Israel, and against this man, whom I have hurt." (Yoma 87a).

Repentance is not withheld from a sinner, rather the obstruction comes from his own wickedness and deceitful heart. But if he sincerely wants to draw near to G-d, the gate of repentance will not be closed before him, and no obstacle will prevent him from reaching it. Rather, G-d will open for him the gate of the just, and teach him the good path in His mercy and in His goodness, as written "*Good and upright is the L-ord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way*" (Tehilim 25:8), and "*from there you will seek the L-ord your G-d, and you will find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul*" (Devarim 4:29), and "*Rather,[this] thing (repentance) is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it*" (Devarim 30:14), and "*The L-ord is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth*" (Tehilim 145:18).

FINAL WORDS

I have already clarified for you, my brother, some of the obligations of repentance, and I revealed to you some of the ways to return (to G-d). Now, there are grounds for a claim against you, and your escapes are gone. What will you answer tomorrow to G-d? - "I was ignorant (that I needed to repent)" - but you were not ignorant! Or maybe you will answer: "I did what I did, but I didn't know (how to repent)".

What will be your answer to this question? And there's no doubt that we will be asked. Prepare the repentance while (G-d) is still pushing off (your punishment, to give you an opportunity to repent). Know my brother that the answer to this question will not be acceptable with our words but only with our deeds. Think to yourself, make a personal accounting of how you can obtain favor from your Creator, know that only one who hastens will reach the good, and the fruit of not doing enough will be regret.

Wake up my brother from the slumber of your simplemindedness. Have mercy on your soul, which is the most important deposit of all the deposits the Creator entrusted by you. How long, and how much longer will you procrastinate in this? You have already consumed your days gratifying your selfish desires, like a base slave, now return and finish your remaining days following the desire of your Creator. You already know that the lifetime of a man is brief, and what remains of your life is still briefer, as our sages said: "the day is short and the workload is great" (Avos 2:15).

You have, my brother, a precious and exalted spirit. With it, you honored this fleeting and lowly world and you abandoned your end that you will be left with. Should you not lift up your spirit to think of that exalted place, the high abode, the place where the spirits which ascend to there will not be lowered from their exaltedness forever. Hurry, while the gates of repentance are open and the acceptance and atonement are still available, as written "*Seek the L-ord while He is found, call to Him while He is still near*" (Yeshaya 55:6).

Hurry my brother, hurry before the horror you dread comes, because you are not assured that you will live for even one more day. Examine yourself with a careful and weighed examination according to what is proper and possible for one like you.

(*Marpe Lenefesh: "careful and weighed"* - i.e. that you carefully examine to do everything according to your physical and mental strength - to not overburden yourself thereby losing everything, as he wrote at the end of gate 10 - "Proceed slowly and thoughtfully in acquiring the good traits, according to how your matters allow you to bear. Beware of taking on too much, or too quickly, without moving gradually, lest you become lost, because too much oil in a candle is a cause to extinguish its light")

And he who wants to obtain the favor of his Creator will enter through the narrow opening through which the pious who bear in this world (in the service of G-d). All of us hope for the good. But only those who hasten towards it will reach it, who run towards it, as our sages said: "Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer and mighty as a lion to do the will of your Father in Heaven" (Avos 5:23), and David said: "*I hastened and delayed not to keep Your commandments*" (Tehilim 119:60).

(*Tov Halevanon: "all of us hope for the good"* - i.e. even though all of us hope for the good, and each person yearns for [the bliss of] the afterlife - the matter does not depend on desire and yearning, rather one must hasten towards it and exert oneself to acquire it.)

Take counsel with your soul. Be ashamed to act with your Creator in a way that you would be ashamed to act with

even a human being like yourself. For, you know that if you angered even a low ranking official of the king, you would not delay to humble yourself to him, and to plea to him to forgive you, so that he will not punish you, even though he has little power in this. All the more so if a high ranking officer were to be angry at you, and even more so if it was the king himself, that you would hasten to seek forgiveness from him, show remorse to him, and try to appease him out of your fear of being swiftly punished.

Yet you already know (from the gate of trust of this book), his helplessness of being able to do anything without the decree of the Creator, as the wise man said: "*A king's heart is like rivulets of water in the L-ord's hand; wherever He wishes, He turns it*" (Mishlei 21:1). All this despite that (he may never get around to punishing you due to) his reign ending, his kingdom being overthrown, his mind confused or distracted by his numerous matters, forgetting or overlooking you. This happens for revealed things, all the more so for hidden things. Despite your knowledge of all of this, you would not delay to seek from him a pardon to your transgression. You would rush to do that which will appease him and be acceptable to him.

My brother, how then can we not be ashamed of our Creator, who observes what is revealed as well as what is concealed of all our deeds and thoughts. He is not subject to forgetting nor overlooking anything. No matter can distract Him from another matter. None can escape from His justice, and there is no end to His reign? How can we turn away from Him, or delay humbling ourselves before Him and repenting to Him, while we don't know our final end nor the number of days we have been allotted.

If a man were to visit a village or province and announce to the people saying: "People, be prepared to go on to the next world, for one of you will pass away this month (be executed by the king - TL), but I will not reveal who it is". Is it not proper for each person to prepare for death, for fear he is that man?

And we can see that every month, death consumes a large number of the living. Surely it is proper for us to fear for our souls every month, at least for one day, and to reflect on our matter and provisions and final destination before we need them, as our sages said: "*repent one day before your death*" (Avos 2:10), and "*at all times let your garments be white*" (Koheles 9:8, i.e. that you are clean of sin).

| (*Marpe Lenefesh: "repent one day before your death" - hence repent today, since perhaps you will die tomorrow.*)

With your superior intellect and recognition examine what you see with your own eyes, and it will be clearer to you than if you had only heard it from someone else.

| (*Pas Lechem: Just like regarding the previous analogy which you heard from someone else regarding a person who "visits a village and announces, etc.", that certainly it is proper that you would need to ready yourself and prepare provisions, so too let it be clear to you through that which you see with your own eyes, that "death consumes etc".*)

Do not push away that which your intellect and understanding [obligate you to do - PL], since it was already said: the Creator bestows many good things to His servants (wisdom, etc), if they accept them (use them to serve Him), they will gain. But if they refuse them (use them to rebel against Him), they will become grounds for a claim against them, and afterwards a reason to exact retribution against them.

The Creator did good to you. He bestowed you with wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. He gave you of them more than another. Be careful, and be careful - that they don't turn to become grounds for a claim against you.

He has already stirred you to the straight way (through this book), and taught you the path leading to your good, out of mercy for you, and to guide you gently. He didn't want you to continue in your foolishness (in pursuing the vain worldly lusts - PL), and continue in your rebelliousness, He conducts with you in the way of kindness as befitting Him, and out of pity and mercy for His creations, as written "*Good and upright is the L-ord; therefore does He instruct sinners in the way*" (Tehilim 25:8). He has already called you gently and with a soft language, and afterwards with rebukes and embarrassments, and finally threatened you with His punishment, in order that you repent to Him, and speedily return to His service.

Hurry my brother, and hurry to lend ear to Him. Listen to His voice, and cling to Him. Choose for your soul what your G-d has chosen for it (the bliss of the afterlife - PL). Desire for it what your Creator desired for it. Do not allow laziness to make you lax in it, because if your own soul is light in your eyes, then what else will be important by you?

(*Tov Halevanon*: All of a man's labor is for himself. And if in losing his soul he is silent, then what 18 does he desire further in all of his deeds?)

Be careful lest the thoughts of your mind (evil inclination) entice you saying: "Now?! After my long protracted neglect of the service of G-d, and the passing of most of my days, how can I now return to G-d and seek His forgiveness?!"

(*Tov Halevanon*: i.e. is it possible that after my protracted wickedness and the passing of most of my days in sin that G-d will accept my repentance?! Because it is incorrect. For even one who transgresses all sins during all of his days, but repents in the last one - G-d will have mercy on him.)

Marpe Lenefesh: What, after most of my days have been wasted in sins, how could I lift up my face to repent to G-d, lest and perhaps He will not accept me? Don't say this since all the prophets, and also Moshe Rabeinu, have already proclaimed, that G-d will accept us in [our] repentance, and there is nothing that stands in the way of repentance...)

You should reply to him (the evil inclination) as the prophet spoke of this matter: "*And when the righteous turns from his righteousness and does wrong.... All his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered; in his treachery that he has perpetrated and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die.... And when a wicked man repents of his wickedness that he has done, and does justice and righteousness, he shall save his soul alive; Because he considered, and turned away from all his transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.*" (Yechezkel 18:24-27), until the end of the matter.

(*Tov Halevanon*: To teach you that everything goes by the end of his deeds. For even one who was righteous all of his days but sinned in the end - he will die for the sin he committed.)

The early ones already compared this to a man who had in his possession silver coins, and he needed to cross a big river, when he reached the river bank, he threw all the coins in the river hoping to slow its flow and walk over the coins, and he threw all of them except for one that remained in his hand, and the current was not stopped by the coins, when he saw this, he said to one of the sailors who happened to pass on the river: "take this coin which is in my hand, and take me through the river with your boat". The sailor did this, and the man reached his desire with the remaining coin that was in his hand. He accomplished more with that coin than all the coins he lost in the river, and it was as if he didn't lose anything.

Likewise, a baal teshuva (penitent) who wasted most of his life in things other than the service of G-d, if he repents at the end of his days, the Creator will forgive him for all of what happened of the bad deeds of all of his previous days, as written: "*None of his transgressions that he had committed shall be remembered against him; [for his righteousness that he had done he shall live]*" (Yechezkel 18:22), and "*None of his sins that he had committed shall be remembered against him; [he performed justice and righteousness; he shall surely live]*" (Yechezkel 33:16).

Let it not be too wearying, my brother, my exhorting you on guarding yourself, which you have neglected for so long to do. Because I am speaking not only to you but to myself also. Submit to the truth. Do not run away from it. Thank the Al-mighty who aroused you on that which you did not know, and let not the long hiding of other people be an excuse for you, because this is one of the distortions and snare of the yetzer (evil inclination) for people who are of weak understanding.

(*Marpe Lenefesh*: do not bring a proof from wicked people who persist in their foolishness and wickedness and never even think of repenting. Perhaps they are even doing well and full of prosperity... take heed and guard yourself from bringing a proof from such blind and wicked people since this is a snare of the yetzer to entice you and others like you.)

May the Al-mighty place us among those who hurry towards him, who repent to Him wholeheartedly, in His mercy. Amen.