

Rambam in Hilchot Teshuva (2:2) lists 3 basic components of the Teshuva process, A-HaKarat Ha'chet (recognition and verbal admission of wrong doing), B- Charata (Feeling remorse over it) C-disassociation from the sin committed and detetminin not to repeat it in the future.

According to Rav Soloveitchik, based upon pesukim and Chazal, there is a 4th element that must be adhered to before Teshuva can be considered. The person must believe that he had the ability, as well as the physical and mental capacity to do the right thing, but, failed to do so. Example, if one is convinced that he cannot possibly control himself at all times from speaking Lashon HaRa, or that he cannot exist in business without dishonest practices because that's the nature of his business, and everyone is doing it, such a person cannot begin the full Teshuva Gemura process. Such a person will mitigate his transgressions by claiming a (in his heart) that he wasn't entirely at fault, he couldn't help himself, he couldn't control himself, and thus, never come to the stark admission that he must change himself. For in truth, everyone has the choice of free-will and could be the master over his own deeds. Gd does not create a human being that does not have control his body and mind and then punish him for transgressions (Avoda Zara 3a).

The Rav derived this concept from the Mitzva of Vidui Maaser in our parasha (23: 13-15). On last day of Pesach of the fourth and seventh years, the farmer is required to take his crops and recite the following: "I have removed the holy items from my house...I have not transgressed any of Your commandments....I have harkened to the voice of HaShem,....I have acted in full accordance with everything You commanded me". Why should our Sages call this declaration a "Vidui", a "Confession"? The Rav suggested, that what the farmer is indeed saying is that "I could have done all that I declared, without any reservation. I had the capacity and capability to do it all correctly. If for some reason I did not fulfill all my obligations it's because of my own shortcomings and not due to any circumstantial issues. This then, is the beginning of Teshuva Gemura process

Another perspective of this Ma'aser could be, that it is, of course, possible that one honestly forgot to give Ma'ser. On the conscious level, there was no intent to violate the law. On the subconscious level, if one didn't give Ma'ser, (or any other Mitzva of Tzedaka) it may show a deep reluctance to part with the produce altogether. It is therefore called Vidui Ma'aser, as each owner comes before Gd, searching the inner intent of his soul. If a mistake was made, there is concern that on the surface it seemed unintentional, but deep down it was intentional. Therefore, these days before Rosh HaShana we struggle to be honest with ourselves, and hopefully find our way to doing Teshuva Gemura.

Shabbat Shalom –from Yerushalayim, Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

QUESTIONS ON PARASHAT KI-TAVOH:

1-The Brachot were given on Har Grizim and Har Eival. What city lies at bottom of these two mountains?

2-In what way (or ways) does the ending of the To'cha'cha in our parasha differ from the ending of the To'Cha'cha in Bechukotai?-

3- What pasuk has a remez (hint) for raising the Torah[hag'baha] and showing it to the congregation?

4-What is the problem with a GER [a convert} reciting the declaration of Bikkurim?

5-On which specific fruits does the Mitzvah of Bikkurim apply?

6- In 26:5- "An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather"—who was this Aramean?

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