

# Laws of Repentance, Chapter 6 (Auto Translated)

English

Auto Translated

## Shiur Overview

### Summary of Shiur — Hilchos Teshuva Chapter 6

---

#### Introduction to the Chapter: Structure and Methodology

##### Review of Chapter 5

In Chapter 5, the Rambam established the fundamental principle that **"libo shel adam masur beyado"** — a person has authority over his actions; he can choose to go in the path of righteousness or wickedness. The Rambam also dealt with the question of yedias Hashem (how does free choice align with the fact that the Almighty knows everything?), and answered that daas Hashem is His essence itself, which we cannot grasp as long as we are a body with a soul — therefore the question is only superficial, but in truth His knowledge does not interfere with free choice.

##### The New Question of Chapter 6

**"Pesukim harbeh yesh baTorah uvdivrei haneviim shehem nir'im kesosirim ikar zeh"** — there are many verses that appear to say that the Almighty makes people sin or do teshuva, which is seemingly a contradiction to free choice.

**Chiddush — Distinction between the questions of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6:** In Chapter 5, the question was from **fundamental beliefs and intellectual foundations** (how does choice align with yedias Hashem and omnipotence?), not from verses. The Rambam there also used the expression **"shelo ala al daas ish"** — it wasn't a real contradiction, just something that needs clarification. But here in Chapter 6, the question is from **the verses themselves** — there are many more verses that sound like the Almighty controls people's actions than verses that sound like free choice.

**Chiddush — The Rambam's methodology: intellect precedes verses:** The Rambam's foundation in learning is: **first comes what the intellect says clearly, then one answers the verses.** When we know something clearly from "darchei hachochma" (as he said at the end of Chapter 5), ten thousand verses cannot refute it — we just need to find a way to understand those verses differently. This is exactly like the topic of **Hashem's corporeality**: there is one verse "hashamayim ushemei hashamayim lo yechalkelucha" and "el mi tedamyuni ve'eshveh" which clearly say that the Almighty doesn't have a body, but hundreds of verses speak as if He does have a body — and the Rambam says those verses are metaphors. Similarly here: "re'eh anochi nosein lifneichem" and "uvacharta" are clear, and the other verses must be understood differently.

**Chiddush — "Rov adam" vs. "tipshei ha'olam":** The Rambam writes: **"venichshalim bahem rov adam"** — most people stumble on these verses. In Chapter 5, the Rambam used derogatory terms like **"tipshei ha'olam"** and **"rov golmei bnei Yisrael"**, but here he only says **"rov adam"** without any derogatory term. The distinction: there

they erred in an intellectual matter (their intellect doesn't work properly), but here they err in interpreting verses — which is an understandable error, and therefore he's not angry at them. "Adam" here means the common people, as the Rambam himself says about the verse **"gam bnei adam gam bnei ish"** — "bnei adam" means simple people, "ish" is a term of importance (like Rashi).

#### Structure of Chapter 6 — Two Questions

The chapter has two questions:

- General question:** Many verses sound like the Almighty makes people good or bad — this is dealt with through the "ikar gadol."
- Specific question** (end of chapter): The Almighty explicitly said about certain people that they will sin, like **"va'avadam ve'inu osam"** which He said to Avraham Avinu about the Egyptians. This is a stronger question — how can we say the Egyptians had free choice if the Almighty already announced beforehand that they would be evil?

---

#### Halacha 1 — The "Ikar Gadol": Punishment Through Loss of Free Choice

##### The Rambam's Words

**"Veya'aleh al da'atam shehaKadosh Baruch Hu gozer al ha'adam la'asos tova o ra'ah, veshe'ein libo shel adam masur lo lehatoso lechol asher yirtze... hareini meva'er ikar gadol shemimenu teda peirush kol osam hapesukim."**

##### Simple Meaning

Most people conclude that the Almighty decrees upon a person to be good or bad, and a person doesn't have his heart in his hand. The Rambam is going to explain a great principle that will clarify all the verses.

##### Chiddushim and Explanations

**1) The "ikar gadol" — choice can eliminate itself:** The principle the Rambam is going to say is: **sometimes a person chooses on his own, and through his choice he loses a piece of his choice.** The Rambam calls this "punishment," but one shouldn't think the Almighty "punishes" him actively — it's the **natural order** itself. A person who becomes habituated to bad habits naturally finds it difficult to return. This isn't a "nasty punishment" but the nature of choice itself.

**2) Choice includes the possibility of excluding oneself:** A deep point: **part of the power of choice itself is that a person can also do actions from which there is no way back.** This isn't a contradiction to choice — on the contrary, it shows how strong choice is. The analogy: a person has a choice to take his life — but after he does it, he no longer has the choice to live. He "used" his choice on a final, irreversible thing. Similarly, a person who sins for years — he used his choice until he reaches a point where he can no longer return.

**3) Why does the verse attribute it to the Almighty?** If this is really a natural consequence of the person's own actions, why does the verse say that **the Almighty** did it? Why does it say "vayechazek Hashem es lev Pharaoh" and not "Pharaoh hardened his own heart"? The answer: when the verse says "the Almighty did," it means **the natural order** that the Almighty created — just as when a person jumps from a bridge and can't return, that's "the Almighty did" in the sense that He created gravity which makes it impossible to return.

**4) Analogy of addiction:** A person who derives pleasure from something becomes addicted, and then he no longer derives pleasure — he does it because he can't stop. This looks like **punishment**, not like pleasure. Like a person smoking on a sickbed — it doesn't look like he's enjoying it, it looks like he's suffering. But the punishment is that this is how the Almighty embedded it in creation — a person can destroy himself.

---

**Halacha 3 — "Bizman she'adam echad o anshei medina chot'im"**

**The Rambam's Words**

**"Bizman she'adam echad o anshei medina chot'im... chet she'oseh mida'ato uvirtzono..."**

**Simple Meaning**

The Rambam speaks both of an individual person and of an entire medina (city/society) that sins.

**Chiddushim and Explanations**

**1) "Medina" as its own entity:** The Rambam shows that a **medina is its own entity**, not just a collection of individuals. People today with their individualism don't grasp how strongly subconsciously they are influenced by the society around them. A person is created from the closest people around him, or from the medina around him.

**2) Practical ramification — collective responsibility:** When a medina makes a decision — for example to go to war — and this is a sin, **everyone** gets punished, because he is part of the medina. Even a refined Jew who lives in a medina that makes bad decisions — whether he wants to or not, he is part of it. "Medina" doesn't mean four cubits of holiness that one can escape from, but the **society** of which one is a part.

**3) Question from Sodom and Amorah (R' Yechiel Meir):** At Sodom and Amorah — "ze'akas Sedom va'Amorah ki rabah" — there was abundant sin. But the abundant sin (the victim, the one who suffered from the sin) **also** died when Sodom was overturned! Is this just? Why did Avraham Avinu cry out that perhaps there are ten righteous people? **Answer:** The abundant sin was also **part of the wicked medina**. She suffered because she is part of a bad city. The Rambam's language is: she should have fled. Not always can one, but such is the way of people.

**4) The distinction between "bechira" and "daas veratzon":** "Bechira" means the **first decision** — a person evaluates, I will be a good person or a bad person, he chooses. "Beda'ato uvirtzono" means something else — it means that **the master of the action is the person himself**, no one forced him. Most of the time a person does things "birtzono" — he is an adult who can do things himself — but it wasn't a true "bechira" (a conscious evaluation). The Rambam's language "hareshus" is particularly fitting — it expresses that the **responsibility and ownership** of the action is the person's.

---

**Halacha 3 (continued) — Three Categories of Punishment**

**The Rambam's Words**

**"VehaKadosh Baruch Hu yodea heiach ye'anish. Yesh chet shehadin nosein shenifra'in mimenu ba'olam hazeh — begufo, o bemamono, o bevanav haketanim. Shevanav shel adam haketanim she'ein bahem daas velo higi'u lichlal mitzvos — kinyanav hem. Kadichtiv 'ish bechet'o yamus' — achar sheya'aseh ish."**

**"Veyesh chet shedino nosein shenifra mimenu la'olam haba, ve'ein alav shum nezek ba'olam hazeh."**

**"Veyesh chet shenifra'im mimenu ba'olam hazeh uva'olam haba."**

**Simple Meaning**

The Almighty knows how to punish. There are sins where the law says one receives punishment in this world — on the body, on property, or on small children. Small children who don't yet have understanding and haven't reached the age of mitzvos are like the father's property. The verse "ish bechet'o yamus" means: only **after** he becomes an "ish" (he has his own understanding) does he die only for his own sins.

**Chiddushim and Explanations**

**1) Why children suffer:** The Rambam gives an answer to the question of small children who die. He says **not** that it's a painful question, but that the child **doesn't belong to itself** — it doesn't yet have understanding, therefore it belongs to the father. The main punishment is **for the parents**.

**2) "Dino nosein" is in the natural way:** When the Rambam says reward and punishment, one must first think of things that are **in the natural way**. For example: a person neglects his house, doesn't work — his small children will die of hunger. One asks: but they're not guilty! One answers: **precisely because** they're not guilty they die — if they were adults, they would go earn for themselves. But now, under their father's authority, the father is responsible for both himself and his children. **This is how the world works.**

**3) What does "dino nosein" mean — how does the type of punishment vary:** It depends on what the person damages. For example: someone damages his **understanding** — perhaps he loses the World to Come. Someone only damages **physical matters** — he receives punishment in this world. There's a secret in this. It's indicated that with mitzvos there's the distinction of "devarim she'adam ochel peiroseihem ba'olam hazeh vehakerein kayemes lo la'olam haba" (which we say in the morning blessings), and with sins there are also the same three distinctions.

---

**Halacha 6 — Teshuva as a Shield Against Calamity**

**The Rambam's Words**

**"Bameh devarim amurim? Bizman shelo asah teshuva, aval im asah teshuva — harei teshuva ketaris lifnei hapuranius."**

**Simple Meaning**

The punishment for sins is only when one hasn't done teshuva. Teshuva is like armor (shield) that protects from calamity.

**Chiddushim and Explanations**

**1) Teshuva helps even against natural consequences:** Teshuva helps not only against "heavenly" punishments, but even against **natural consequences** of sins. For example, a person who fights with everyone and steals from people — the natural result is that he'll be caught. Even on such natural results teshuva is a "shield." Or a person who violates "venishmartem me'od lenafshoseichem" — the natural punishment is illness, but teshuva (together with medicine) protects him.

**2) Distinction between "teshuva" and "ma'asim tovim":** The Rambam brings the **Mishna (Avos):** "Teshuva uma'asim tovim ketaris lifnei hapuranius." He explains: "**Teshuva**" is for after the fact — when one has already sinned; "**ma'asim tovim**" is from the outset — one doesn't sin to begin with. Two ways to avoid calamity.

---

### Halacha 6 (continued) — Teshuva Birtzono Uveda'ato

#### The Rambam's Words

**"Keshem she'adam chotei birtzono uveda'ato, kach hu oseh teshuva birtzono uveda'ato."**

#### Simple Meaning

Teshuva is the same type of act as sin — both must come from the person's own will and understanding.

#### Chiddushim and Explanations

**1) Teshuva is not an exception to free choice:** One shouldn't think that the Almighty "makes" a person do teshuva. When a person does teshuva, it's **his own decision**, just as the sin was his own decision. Therefore he deserves the reward for teshuva — because he did it himself.

**2) Preparation for the answer:** This is a preparation for the answer to the question of verses that imply the Almighty takes away free choice.

---

### Halacha 6 (continued) — The Punishment of Prevention of Teshuva

#### The Rambam's Words

**"Ve'efshar shechotei adam chet gadol o chata'im rabim, ad sheyiten hadin lifnei dayan ha'emes sheyehei onshen shel zeh hachotei... shemone'in mimenu hateshuva, ve'ein manihin lo reshush lashuv merishyo, kedei sheyamus veyo'vad bechet'o she'asah."**

#### Simple Meaning

It's possible that a person sins so much or so severely that the true judge rules that his punishment should be that the possibility of teshuva is taken away from him, and he remains in his sins and dies as a wicked person.

#### Chiddushim and Explanations

**1) "Dayan ha'emes" — what does this mean?** Two possibilities: (a) The Almighty is the judge, and "hadin" is like a prosecutor/defender (as Chovos Halevavos says that the "pamalya shel ma'aloh" is the understanding). (b) "Dayan ha'emes" means that **we don't know what the judgment is** for each specific thing — only the Almighty knows what is right. The Almighty doesn't "decide" what is right — He **knows** what is right. He can't decide that something that isn't right should become right.

**2) "Reshus" — lost the choice:** The Rambam uses the language "ve'ein manihin lo **reshus** lashuv merishyo." This fits with his previous language: "ma'asav shel adam bireshuso", "libo shel adam bireshuso", "reshus nesunas lo." The punishment is that one loses the **reshus** — one's own choice — to return.

**3) Analogy of Hitler:** If a person murders six million Jews, and then says "I want to do teshuva" — what is the true judgment? The true judgment is: **You cannot do teshuva. You should remain wicked.** Not only that your teshuva won't be accepted — but **it will be ensured that you cannot even want to do teshuva.** This is already preparation for dying as a wicked person.

**4) Two ways to understand "punishment":** (a) Punishment as a reward-and-punishment system — the Almighty actively punishes. (b) Punishment as a **natural consequence** — when a person does sins for a long time, he naturally loses the ability to open his eyes. This is "metamtem es halev" — the dulling of the heart makes teshuva harder to do. The study tends to say that the Rambam means the second way — it's a **result** of the sin, not a separate punishment.

---

### Halacha 6 (continued) — Verses: Yeshayahu 6:10 — "Hashmen lev ha'am hazeh"

#### The Rambam's Words

**"Hu asher amar haKadosh Baruch Hu al yedei Yeshayahu: 'Hashmen lev ha'am hazeh ve'oznav hachbed ve'einav hashu, pen yireh be'einav uve'oznav yishma ulevavo yavin veshav verafa lo.'"**

#### Simple Meaning

The Rambam brings this verse as proof that there's a reality where the Almighty takes away the possibility of teshuva as punishment for previous sins.

#### Chiddushim and Explanations

**1) The analogy of "fat":** When a person's heart becomes "fat" (hashmen), it prevents his heart from functioning — as in medicine, when fat deposits on the heart. Normally a person has open eyes, ears, and heart — he can see rebuke, hear rebuke, understand that he did wrong, and make a decision to do teshuva ("veshav verafa lo"). The punishment is that **this becomes blocked** — heart, ears, eyes.

**2) Connection to "kaved lev Pharaoh":** The same language — "kaved" — is used with Pharaoh. The person's heart (understanding, receiving rebuke) becomes heavy/blocked.

**3) Discussion about the simple meaning in the verse:** The **simple meaning** in this verse is perhaps not as the Rambam learns it. The verse can mean: (a) The Almighty actively made their heart fat (in the past). (b) This is a **rebuke/warning** — if you continue this way, eventually "hashmen lev ha'am hazeh" will happen (in the future). The Rambam learns it as **punishment for previous sins** — but this isn't necessarily the simple meaning. However, one can say that the Rambam wants to **frighten the world** — he wants to make people afraid so they will do teshuva, not that they shouldn't.

---

### Halacha 6 (continued) — Verse from Divrei Hayamim: "Vayihyu mal'ivim bemal'achei haElokim"

### The Rambam's Words

**"Vechen hu: 'Vayihyu mal'ivim bemal'achei haElokim uvozim devarav umis'at'im binevi'av... ad alos chamas Hashem be'amo ad le'ain marpei."**

**"Chata ish birtzono vehirbah lifshoa... shenischayev hu limno'a mimenu hateshuva shehee marpei."**

#### Simple Meaning

The Rambam brings a second verse (Divrei Hayamim II, 36:16) about the Jews in Yirmiyahu's time who mocked the prophets, as another example of the same principle — how sins lead to losing the ability to hear rebuke and do teshuva. "Marpei" refers to teshuva (like "veshavu verafa lo").

#### Chiddushim and Explanations

**1) "Mal'ivim bemal'achei haElokim":** They tortured Yirmiyahu the prophet, didn't want to accept his rebuke, followed false prophets.

**2) "Mis'at'im binevi'av":** Is explained as "gaslight" — they confused, mixed up, didn't take the prophets seriously.

**3) Three expressions of sin = chazaka in sin:** The verse lists three expressions of sin (mal'ivim, bozim, mis'at'im), and three times makes a chazaka — they became established in sin, and therefore "ad le'ain marpei" — they can no longer find a way to teshuva.

**4) Question on the Rambam's proof from this verse:** The verse itself doesn't explicitly speak of teshuva. "Ein marpei" can simply mean that such troubles will come that cannot be healed (physically/nationally). The Rambam reads in the concept of teshuva based on "veshavu verafa lo" which appears elsewhere, but in this verse itself there's no word teshuva. The proof is characterized as "somewhat weak proof."

**5) Another question — the verse speaks of their own choice, not of taking away choice:** In Divrei Hayamim it says "vayakesh es orpo" — Tzidkiyahu himself was stubborn, not that the Almighty hardened his heart (like with Pharaoh "va'ani achazek es lev Pharaoh"). If it had said that the Almighty hardened Tzidkiyahu's heart, the Rambam would have had better proof. But the verse describes their own guilt.

**6) Answer — the mechanism of losing the power of teshuva:** Yirmiyahu the prophet gave rebuke to Tzidkiyahu and the Jews several times. So many times did they mock him that they already lost the ability to start taking him seriously. This itself was their punishment — a natural process where repeated sin leads to inability to change.

**7) Distinction between "nigzar dino" and "nimna mimenu hateshuva":** In Sefer Melachim it says that Menashe's sin remained and because of it came the destruction, even after things later improved. This is a concept of "nigzar dino" — but the Rambam's chiddush is different: the way the judgment was decreed was through their inability to do teshuva. This is a distinction — not just a decree of punishment, but specifically taking away the power of teshuva as punishment.

---

**Halacha 6 (continued) — Pharaoh: "Va'ani achazek es lev Pharaoh"**

### The Rambam's Words

**"Ulefi shechata me'atzmo techila vehera leYisrael shehem gerim be'artzo shene'emar hava nischakma**

**lo, nitan hadin limno'a mimenu hateshuva ad shenifra mimenu."**

**"Velamah haya shole'ach lo beyad Moshe ve'omer lo shalach va'aseh teshuva, vechvar amar lo haKadosh Baruch Hu she'eino meshalei'ach... kedei lehodi'a leva'ei olam shebizman shemone'a haKadosh Baruch Hu teshuva lachotei eino yachol lashuv ela yamus berishyo she'asah batechila birtzono."**

#### Simple Meaning

Pharaoh himself by his own choice sinned against the Jews. "Hava nischakma lo" shows that he used his wisdom and understanding to make a strategy against them. The punishment was that he lost the ability to do teshuva until he received his punishment. The Rambam asks: if the Almighty already said that Pharaoh won't send them out, why does He send Moshe Rabbeinu to tell him to do teshuva? The answer: "Kedei lehodi'a leva'ei olam" — to inform the world of the principle that when the Almighty takes away teshuva, the person can no longer do teshuva.

#### Chiddushim and Explanations

**1) "Hava nischakma lo" — wickedness with understanding:** The Rambam places special importance on "hava nischakma lo" — Pharaoh didn't just sin, he used his wisdom, his will, his choice, his understanding, to make a decision to harm the Jews. Because he did it with wisdom and understanding, the "nitan hadin" — the just punishment — is that he loses his power of choice.

**2) The punishment is not forever — "ad shenifra mimenu":** The Rambam emphasizes that teshuva wasn't taken away forever. Only until he receives his punishment (the ten plagues). After that he can already do teshuva. And indeed, Pharaoh ultimately sent out the Jews. (The Midrash is also mentioned that Pharaoh survived and did teshuva, but this is characterized as "already midrashim.")

**3) Interesting contradiction — "va'ani achazek es lev Pharaoh" vs. Pharaoh sends out the Jews:** The Almighty says "va'ani achazek es lev Pharaoh" — he shouldn't send out the Jews. But in the end Pharaoh did send them out. This shows that the Almighty can control it — He can withdraw the decree and let him do teshuva.

**4) Moshe Rabbeinu's mission as a teshuva mission:** Also Moshe Rabbeinu's prophecy is built on teshuva — "kol hanevi'im" is built on teshuva. Moshe knew it wouldn't work, but in practice this was his mission.

**5) The Rambam's verses — "ve'ata va'avadecha yadati" and "uva'avur zos he'emadticha":** The Rambam combines two verses: (a) "Ve'ata va'avadecha yadati" — Moshe tells Pharaoh that he already knows Pharaoh won't listen; (b) "Uva'avur zos he'emadticha... ulema'an saper shemi bechol ha'aretz" — the purpose is to inform the world. Moshe Rabbeinu himself had the question and also answered it — and he also said it to Pharaoh himself.

**6) Chiddush in the simple meaning of "ulema'an saper shemi bechol ha'aretz":** The simple meaning of "ulema'an saper shemi" is that the Almighty wants to show His power in the world. But the Rambam learns that the "saper shemi" means specifically to inform about Hilchos Teshuva — the principle that whoever sins too much loses the ability to do teshuva. This means the lesson of Pharaoh is Hilchos Teshuva in general, not just a demonstration of God's power.

**7) Distinction in understanding the "example" of Pharaoh:** One can think that the Almighty wanted to make an example of what happens to whoever sins so much (a punishment-example). But the Rambam says differently: the example is to show what **happens when** one sins so much — the mechanism itself, that one can no longer do teshuva. This is "not simple meaning" — it's a novel teaching.

---

**Halacha 6 (continued) — Other Examples: Sichon, Canaanites, Israel in the Days of Eliyahu**

**Sichon King of Cheshbon**

**"Vechen Sichon, lefi avonos shehayah lo nischayev limno'a mimenu hateshuva, shene'emar ki hikshah Hashem Elokecha es rucho."**

**Simple meaning:** Sichon is also an example like Pharaoh — his previous sins caused him to lose the possibility of teshuva.

**Chiddushim:**

**1) Meaning of "nischayev":** Two possibilities: (a) The sins **caused** the prevention of teshuva as a natural result, (b) He became **obligated** — a judgment of reward and punishment, that he deserves the punishment of prevention of teshuva.

**2) Question from the verse:** In the verse it says "lema'an tito veyadecha" — the reason why Hashem hardened Sichon's heart is so he would fall into Israel's hands. This seemingly contradicts the Rambam's explanation that it was punishment for his sins. With Pharaoh the Rambam has good proof from Nevuchadnetzar, but with Sichon we don't know what his specific sins were.

**3) Answer — two parts:** One can hold one's head on more than one thing. The purpose of "lema'an tito veyadecha" is the external goal (Jews should get his territory). But **how** this happened — through prevention of teshuva — that's the punishment for his sins. Both are true simultaneously.

**The Canaanites in the Days of Yehoshua**

**"Vechen haKena'anim... pita osam vesiya'am ba'avur to'avoseihem va'avonoseihem shehayah mone'im mehem hateshuva ad she'asu milchama im Yisrael."**

**Simple meaning:** The Canaanites had abominations (idolatry etc.) that caused Hashem to prevent them from teshuva, until they made war with Israel and lost.

**Chiddushim:**

**1) "Ad she'asu milchama":** This means that otherwise they could have done teshuva **before**, and then the entire plan of Sefer Yehoshua wouldn't have succeeded. The Almighty prevented them from teshuva specifically until after the war.

**2) Proof from the verse:** "Lo hoshiru ir asher hishlama el bnei Yisrael" — this proves that there **would have been** an option for them to make peace. The smart thing would have been for a few cities to make a decision that it's worthwhile to make peace. But the punishment for their previous abominations was that they couldn't take the smart step.

**3) Distinction between types of sins:** The Canaanites' abominations (idolatry, impurity) were **beforehand** — not against Jews. But through this they fell into the state where they couldn't do teshuva, and therefore they made war instead of peace.

**4) "Lehis'aiv" — active verb:** The Rambam uses the language "lehis'aiv be'artzam" — an active verb, meaning

actively defiling themselves with abomination. This underscores that they did it **themselves**, Hashem didn't force them.

**Israel in the Days of Eliyahu**

**"Vechen Yisrael bimei Eliyahu, lefi shehirbu lifshoa mana mehem hateshuva, shene'emar ve'ata hasibosa es libam achoranis."**

**Simple meaning:** Eliyahu the prophet says to the Almighty: "You turned their heart backward" — instead of them going forward and doing teshuva, Hashem prevented them, because they sinned so much.

**Chiddush:** Eliyahu himself says "ve'ata hasibosa es libam" — he blames the Almighty, as it were. The Rambam explains: "Kelomar mana'tam min hateshuva" — this was their punishment for many sins.

---

**The Rambam's Conclusion — "Nimtzeit omer"**

**The Rambam's Words**

**"Nimtzeit omer she'ein haKadosh Baruch Hu gozer al Pharaoh lehara leYisrael, velo al Sichon lachato be'artzo, velo al haKena'anim lehis'aiv, velo al Yisrael la'avod avoda zara, ela kulam chat'u me'atzman venischayvu kulam limno'a mehem hateshuva."**

**Simple Meaning**

The Almighty didn't decree on anyone to sin. All sinned on their

own, and therefore they all became obligated to be prevented from teshuva.

**Chiddushim and Explanations**

**1) "Kulam chat'u me'atzman" — the entire time, not just in the beginning:** It's not the simple meaning that first Pharaoh acted on his own and then he was forced. **The entire time** he himself is guilty. Even when it says "vayechazek Hashem es lev Pharaoh," it doesn't mean it became **coercion**. He is still **birtzono uveda'ato**.

**2) The distinction between bechira, ratzon, and ones — three stages:** A progression of three stages is explained:

- **First stage:** A person does sins with full **free choice** (bocher).

- **Second stage:** After many times it becomes a **habit** — he is no longer choosing in the full sense, but he still does it **birtzono uveda'ato**. He made himself into such a person.

- **Third stage:** He cannot return at all — this is the **punishment** of prevention of teshuva.

**But all three stages are birtzono** — it's never coercion. Even in the third stage, when looking from outside one sees he cannot return, he still does it with will.

**3) Answer to a well-known question from the Acharonim:** If a person is only liable when he is **choosing**, why does he receive punishment the second time he does the same sin (when it's already a habit)? The answer is the distinction of **bechira** and **birtzono uveda'as** — he perhaps isn't choosing, but it's still with will, because he put himself into this situation.

**4) "Lachato be'artzo" — meaning:** The language "lachato be'artzo" (by Sichon) points to the **first stage** — his own sins in his land, not against Israel. After he already "lachato

beYisrael" — that's perhaps already in the stage of "mana mehem hateshuva."

**[Digression: Shabbos HaGadol and Shabbos Teshuva — Two Parts of Teshuva]**

Shabbos HaGadol and Shabbos Teshuva are both drashos of the Rav, but they represent two different parts of teshuva:

- **Shabbos Teshuva** = free choice of the person — which depends on the person's own choice to do teshuva.

- **Shabbos HaGadol** = awakening from Above — we speak of the ten plagues, which is a chapter in Hilchos Teshuva (prevention of teshuva as punishment). This is the part that is **not in the person's control**.

**What is the Exodus from Egypt in this context?** The Almighty gave us the **opportunity** to be the opposite of Pharaoh — we can do teshuva. This is the miracle: that we received the possibility, the heavenly assistance, the intellect, the external drive. This is **God's action**, not human action — not choice, but a part of teshuva. Therefore one thanks for it on Shabbos HaGadol.

In Chassidic works it says that Shabbos HaGadol is "awakening from Above." In the Rambam's terms this means: sometimes the Almighty gives a person an opportunity — heavenly assistance, intellect, or external drive — through which he can do teshuva.

---

**Halacha 5 (First Part) — Prayer for Teshuva**

**The Rambam's Words**

"Ba'inyan hazeh sha'alu hanevi'im vehatzadikim bisfiloseihem meHashem... le'ozram al derech ha'emes, kemo she'amar David horeni Hashem darkecha... kelomar al yimne'uni chata'ai derech ha'emes shemimenu eda darkecha va'ayached shemecha."

"Veruach nediva tismecheni — kelomar taniach ruchi la'asos cheftzecha."

**Simple Meaning**

David HaMelech and the prophets asked the Almighty for help to go on the path of truth — not that the Almighty should remove the yetzer hara, but that sins shouldn't block the path.

**Chiddushim and Explanations**

**1) The question: How can one pray for someone else's teshuva?** Perhaps for oneself one can say that teshuva is part of choice — but how can a person pray that **another** should do teshuva? This seems to be a contradiction to free choice. People pray that children shouldn't sin, we say "veten belibenu le'avdecha be'emes," "hashivenu avinu leTorasecha vekarevenu malkenu la'avodatecha" — these are daily prayers that seem to ask that the Almighty interfere with choice. (The Chazon Ish in Emuna Uvitachon also asks this question; the Shem MiShmuel makes it even harder — how can a person pray that **another** should do teshuva?)

**2) "Horeni Hashem darkecha" — not nullification of yetzer hara, but derech ha'emes:** The language "horeni Hashem darkecha" doesn't say that the Almighty should remove the yetzer hara. The verse means "derech ha'emes" — a broad thing that includes beliefs, understanding, character traits. The word "darkecha" fits very well with the Rambam's approach in Hilchos De'os, where "darchei Hashem" means the character traits, the good path, the middle path.

**3) "Ahalech ba'amitecha" — the person must walk himself:** The verse "horeni Hashem darkecha ahalech ba'amitecha" means: show me the way so that I can walk in truth. The person doesn't ask that the Almighty walk for him, but that he receive the ability to walk himself.

**4) "Al yimne'uni chata'ai" — the slippery slope of sin:** David asks that his previous sins shouldn't hold him back from derech ha'emes. This fits with the Rambam's approach regarding Pharaoh — that sins can bring habit, habit becomes nature (hergel na'aseh teva), and then there's already a reality that is "external" to the person's actual choice. **On this external part one can pray** — because prayer works on what is no longer entirely in the person's control, not on what a person must do himself.

**5) "Veruach nediva tismecheni" — not the Almighty's spirit, but the person's own spirit:** The Rambam explains: "**Kelomar taniach ruchi la'asos cheftzecha**" — let my spirit be free to do Your will. David doesn't ask that the Almighty force him to do good, but that the Almighty remove the obstacles (habit in sin) that hold him back from doing what he himself wants.

**6) Great chiddush — prayer for good doesn't mean nullification of choice, but restoration of choice:** When one prays for one's good, it doesn't mean **not** that the Almighty should take away choice. One prays that the Almighty should **restore** the authority/choice that was lost through habit in sin. This is a fundamental distinction: with punishment the Almighty takes away authority; with prayer one asks that He restore authority.

---

**Halacha 5 (continued) — "Tov veyashar Hashem al ken yoreh chata'im baderech"**

**The Rambam's Words**

"Tov veyashar Hashem al ken yoreh chata'im baderech, yadrech anavim bamishpat vilameid anavim darko."

"Ein hakavana shelo yuchlu livechor bara... shehu shole'ach lahem nevi'im modi'im lahem darchei Hashem umachzirim osam biteshuva. Ve'od shenatan bahem ko'ach lilmod ulehavin, shemida zo bechol adam, kol zeman shehu nimshach bedarchei hachochma vehatzedek hu ohavam verodei acharihem."

**Simple Meaning**

The Rambam asks: How does this fit with choice, that the Almighty "guides" people? He answers: It doesn't mean they cannot choose evil. Rather the Almighty's goodness and justice is shown in two ways: (a) He sends **prophets** who inform of God's ways and bring back to teshuva; (b) He embedded in every person a **natural ability** to learn and understand, that when a person is drawn to the ways of wisdom and righteousness, he loves it and pursues it. Both are "external" help that doesn't take away choice.

**Chiddushim and Explanations**

**1) "Haba letaheer mesa'yin oso" — the Rambam's explanation:** The Rambam brings the statement of Chazal "haba letaheer mesa'yin oso" and explains: "**Kelomar yimtza atzmo ne'ezar al hadavar**" — he will **find himself** helped. This doesn't mean a supernatural intervention, but that nature is such that when a person seeks to purify himself, he will find

the forces, the circumstances, the opportunities — whether through prophets or through the ways of wisdom and righteousness — to be helped on his way. (The Midrash HaNe'elam (Zohar) says that "mesa'yin" means his own soul or souls of other tzadikim — the Rambam says prophets.)

**2) Why doesn't the Rambam say there's a parallel "reward" for good — that one becomes "forced" to do good?** Just as there's a punishment that after a long time of sin one loses the authority to do teshuva, there should be a parallel reward — that after a long time of doing good, one should no longer be able to fall back!

**The answer: "forcing good" is not good.** When a person is forced to do good without choice, it's worth nothing. The Almighty doesn't want people to serve Him like robots. As R' Nachman once said — "it doesn't work that way." With bad one can lose authority (because bad remains bad even without choice), but with good — without choice it's not good.

**3) The structural distinction between good and evil:** With good we say that the will is true — this is what a person truly wants. With evil the person is "mistaken" — he thinks he wants, but truly he doesn't. But both have the mechanism of "mitzva goreres mitzva va'veira goreres aveira."

**4) Question on this distinction:** The sinner also feels he has a desire — he says he can't help himself, it becomes an "illness." With good one can say that even without "mis'aveh lahem verodei acharihem" — even without the desire — he's in Gan Eden and can't help himself, but with good this is even better (not a problem).

**5) The answer:** With good — the Almighty doesn't take away authority, but lets the person's own attraction to wisdom and righteousness work. This is "meshu'abad mitzad atzmo" — it comes from within, not from outside. With evil — the Almighty takes away authority as punishment, which is an external intervention.

---

## Halacha 5 (Second Part) — Prophecies About Future Wickedness

### The Rambam's Words

"Va'avadam ve'inu osam" — harei gazar al haMitzrim la'asos ra... "Vekam ha'am hazeh vezana acharei elohei nechar ha'aretz" — harei gazar al Yisrael la'avod avoda zara, velamah nifra mehem?

Answer: "Lefi shelo gazar al ish peloni hayadu'a sheyihyeh hu hazoneh... velo hodi'o haBoreh ela minhago shel olam."

"Lamah hadavar domeh? Le'omer 'ha'am hazeh yihyu vahem tzadikim uresha'im' — lo yomar harasha shekvar nigzar alav sheyihyeh rasha."

"Ki lo yechdal evyon mikerev ha'aretz."

"Vechen haMitzrim — kol echad ve'echad me'osam haMitzrim, im ratza shelo lehara leYisrael, hareshus beyado, shelo gazar al ish yadu'a, ela hodi'a shesof zar'o lehishta'aved be'erezt lo lahem."

### Simple Meaning

The question is: When the Almighty says a prophecy that Egypt will torment Jews, or that Jews will serve idolatry — this is a decree, and how can one punish for something that was predetermined? The Rambam answers: The Almighty didn't predetermine any specific person — not a specific Egyptian

and not a specific Jew. He only informed "minhago shel olam" — the natural course of the world. Each individual had choice.

### Chiddushim and Explanations

**1) "Minhago shel olam" — the prophecy says no chiddush:** The Rambam means something very deep: the prophecy of "va'avadam ve'inu osam" or "vekam ha'am hazeh vezana" essentially says no chiddush that wouldn't have been without the prophecy. Even without the prophecy it would have been so. The Almighty only "told the natural way" — He informed how the world works. Just as one can say "in every nation there will be wicked people" — this is a statistical reality, not a decree on a specific person.

**2) Analogy of "ki lo yechdal evyon mikerev ha'aretz":** The verse says there will always be poor people. No one says that it was decreed upon him to be poor because such a verse exists. Similarly — when the Almighty says there will be idolatry, it doesn't mean it was decreed upon you.

**3) The choice is "which bench you sit on":** There are "positions" — tzadikim, beinonim, resha'im — and each person's choice is which role he takes upon himself. Similar to the analogy from the Haggada — the wise son, the simple son, the wicked son, the one who doesn't know to ask — each person chooses which one he wants to be.

**4) Even Pharaoh himself chose:** The Rambam means that even Pharaoh himself decided to be the wicked one. The Almighty didn't even say it would be in Egypt — He said "be'erezt lo lahem." Pharaoh himself decided to be the enslaver. Each individual Egyptian could have decided not to torment Jews.

**5) [Digression: A story about choice within a system]:** A story of a Jew after the war in Eretz Yisrael who sits in prison and says: "Yankel is head of government, Moshe is minister of religion, Berel is finance minister, and I'm the prisoner." The point: even within a system each person has a choice. Similarly with Egypt — within the structure of Egypt there were Egyptians who did other things, not just wickedness. But the Rambam means even more — even all Egyptians, even Pharaoh, each one individually decided.

**6) [Digression: Terror organizations]:** Even in a terror organization like Hezbollah there are kindergartens and nursery teachers. The child of the great terrorist can run the playgrounds. Within every structure there is choice.

---

## Halacha 5 (End) — "She'ein ko'ach ba'adam lada'as heichach yada haKadosh Baruch Hu"

### The Rambam's Words

"She'ein ko'ach ba'adam lada'as heichach yada haKadosh Baruch Hu devarim she'asidim lihyos."

### Simple Meaning

A person, as long as he is composed of body and soul (matter and spirit), doesn't have the ability to understand what daas of the Kadosh Baruch Hu is.

### Chiddushim and Explanations

**1) The Almighty knows each specific Egyptian — how does the answer help?** If the answer is that the Almighty didn't say which specific Egyptian — but He knows! His knowledge is much greater! This brings back the previous question of knowledge and choice. The Rambam answers: You don't know what "daas Hashem" means.

**2) Deep meaning in "daas Hashem" — the Almighty's knowledge is not "additional" to reality:** For us, knowledge is something outside of reality — we have knowledge about a reality. But with the Almighty — "hu yodea vehu ed vehu dayan" — His knowledge, His reality, and His being are all one. The Almighty knows things exactly as they are, because His knowledge is not additional to reality. Therefore, when He says "there will be wicked people" — this is exactly how the world is. Which specific person will be wicked — this depends on the person's choice. And this is not at all a contradiction to the Almighty knowing everything, because His knowledge works in a completely different way than our knowledge.

**3) "One must wait until one is a soul":** The Rambam says it's not that one can't understand it at all — but as long as one

is a person of body and soul one cannot fully understand it. When one will be a soul without a body one will understand it better.

**4) The Ra'avad is not satisfied with the Rambam's answers:** The Ra'avad on this chapter is "generally not happy" with the Rambam's answers. But the Rambam has a very clear approach in this, and whoever learns the Rambam well sees that the Rambam speaks precisely to the main question.

**5) The Rambam's answer of "minhago shel olam" is not just a technical answer** (he didn't say which specific person), but a fundamental chiddush about the nature of prophecy and daas Hashem — that prophecy in such matters is a revelation of "minhago shel olam," not a decree that creates a new reality.

## Full Transcript

### Laws of Repentance Chapter 6 — Explanation of Verses That Appear to Contradict the Principle of Free Choice

#### Introduction: Review of Chapter 5 and Introduction to Chapter 6

##### Speaker 1:

Gentlemen, we are learning in Laws of Repentance Chapter 6, the sixth chapter of Laws of Repentance.

We said that... the Rambam stops in the middle of speaking about the matter that a person has authority over himself, a person has control over himself, or as we said, "**libo shel adam masur b'yado**" (a person's heart is given into his hand), a person can decide to be a tzaddik or to be a rasha. And better said, not to become a tzaddik or a rasha right now, but to begin going now in the direction of being a tzaddik, or to move in the other direction, to defile himself from the good path.

And the Rambam... afterwards the Rambam discussed how this fits with the other knowledge that we have, that Hashem does everything. To this he said that this itself Hashem made, that the nature of man should be that he can choose. He asked, and how does this fit with what we know that Hashem knows everything? And if Hashem knows everything and He knows that someone will be a rasha, how can the person choose not to be a rasha?

And to this he answered that the question is only difficult when Hashem's knowledge is like the knowledge that we have. But once we understand that Hashem's knowledge is completely something else, a part of Hashem's essence, and therefore we don't have any... not to say the word "a part," because the whole point about Hashem is that He doesn't have parts, Hashem is One, Hashem is not divided into parts. It's... but His knowledge is His essence.

Therefore, we don't have any comprehension of His essence, as He told us that as long as a person is composed of a body and a soul, he cannot... the body holds him back from understanding the essence of the Holy One Blessed be He, "His truth" as he called it. Therefore, on the surface it looks like a question, but if one could comprehend Hashem's knowledge, we would understand that there is knowledge that doesn't interfere with man's free choice. That was Chapter 5.

#### Structure of Chapter 6: Many Verses That Appear Contradictory

And now the Rambam in Chapter 6 continues further, and it's somewhat similar to how at the beginning of Foundations of Torah the Rambam explained, he gave other foundations of the faith, the Rambam first said what the foundation is, and he brought a series of verses. Afterwards he says, but there are other verses where it seems somewhat different, he goes to answer them. That's what he's going to do here, not just answer, how does the matter that a person has complete free choice over his actions fit, how does it fit with certain verses where it appears otherwise?

##### Speaker 2:

Yes, not a little, the real, real, first of all, it's actually correct that in the previous chapter there were already certain such questions on this, but that was more like someone who says it can't be at all the whole thing, because how can one say that a person has free will if Hashem is all-powerful etc.

#### Distinction Between the Questions of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6

One must understand the distinction, it wasn't a question from verses, it was a question from certain such principles of faith that one has, or certain basic foundations of knowledge. Other heretics that exist today. Yes, and also it was like "**shelo alah al da'at ish**" (it didn't occur to anyone), it wasn't a serious question, it was such a thing that needs to be clarified, it is indeed a problem, but it's something that needs to be clarified, not a contradiction.

Here it goes further, that indeed, let's say there are indeed one or two verses that one can bring a proof that a person has free will given to him, but there are many more verses that say the opposite, as it says here "**pesukim harbeh**" (many verses).

#### The Rambam's Methodology: Intellect Before Verses

It's very similar to what he brought very nicely the exact same structure regarding the topic of whether Hashem has a body. There is indeed one verse that says "**hashamayim ushemei hashamayim lo yechalkelucha**" (the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain You), it says "**el mi tedamyuni v'eshveh**" (to whom will you liken Me and compare), one verse that one can bring that Hashem doesn't have a body, but there are tens, hundreds, I don't know how many verses that speak as if Hashem does have a body. Should

one say that this verse is genuine, this must be understood literally, and the other verses are a parable and the like, a forced interpretation.

And very similarly he does here, and he's going to say that all these verses don't mean that Hashem doesn't have free will, that a person doesn't have free will, they mean something else. I mean here there is, it's very clear, **"re'eh anochi notein lifneichem hayom"** (see, I place before you today), a person has a choice, **"uvacharta"** (and you shall choose), there are very clear verses, but there are indeed verses where it seems otherwise.

Let's see, I mean the Rambam understands that there is, if someone, in other words, let's say it this way, if someone would go only with the verses, it would come out to him that the mistaken opinion is correct. In other words, there are two ways how one learns something, how one learns reality.

One way is, one begins, one sees, how many verses? There are sixty verses that lean toward this opinion, two verses toward that opinion. Majority of verses, majority of verses. Majority of verses, majority of verses. Count more like that, and the Rambam says so, most people think and indeed most people think so, how many times it says more that there is good, and the Rambam will say after King Solomon **"rov bnei adam"** (most people), most people think like that.

But the Rambam had a different way of thinking. The Rambam said that there is one verse, or one foundation, one intellectual foundation, one thing that is intellectually clear, which as we said earlier at the end of Chapter 5, **"midarchei hara'ot"** (from the ways of evil), **"midarchei hachochmah"** (from the ways of wisdom), he said, **"midarchei hachochmah"** there is one thing that one knows clearly, ten thousand verses cannot contradict it. Oh, there are other verses? Certainly, those verses must mean something, one will have to force to find a... one will have to find a way out of those verses, but that is the Rambam's order of study, or his foundation always, that first he goes what the fact is, what there is always a verse on that, but it's more built on that this is the correct understanding. Afterwards, all verses that exist that are verses against this, okay, we'll simply answer the verse. That's the thing.

#### **Halacha 1: Many Verses in the Torah and in the Words of the Prophets**

Okay, so the Rambam asks here a question. Let's give an overview of the chapter, because I think it's very good to keep track. The Rambam begins and asks a great question, that there are many times where he says that he's not making a list of verses, but one sees from within which verses he's speaking about. There are many verses where one sees that it says that Hashem makes people sin, or makes people do repentance, makes people better or worse. There are very many verses that sound like they're built on this assumption. That's one question that the Rambam asks, and he answers it with an interesting answer that I think most people don't understand what he's trying to explain.

And secondly, afterwards he asks another question, which looks like a second question. I mean one must also understand it much better, which is at the end of the chapter he asks another question, that there are places where Hashem explicitly said about certain people that they will do certain sins, like to the Egyptians Hashem said before Avraham Avinu **"va'avadam v'inu otam"** (and they will enslave them and

afflict them). That's a stronger question. It's not simply here in general the verses that say that Hashem makes people good or bad, that's one type of question. Afterwards there's a second specific question, that sometimes Hashem says that the Egyptians will be bad, so apparently it means that the Egyptians don't have free choice to be bad. It could be that it's still from the same question, but that's more or less the structure of the chapter.

#### **The Rambam's Language: "Rov Adam" – Not "Fools of the World"**

So yes, therefore, the Rambam says thus: **Many verses there are in the Torah and in the words of the prophets that appear as contradicting this principle**, they contradict the principle that a person has the authority in his own hand to choose. **And most people stumble on them**, most people stumble on these verses. In the previous chapter he said that all the fools of the world and most of the ignorant children of Israel. Here however he doesn't give a derogatory name to the people, because they're mistaken about a verse. One who is mistaken about a verse he's not angry at them. One who is mistaken because their intellect doesn't work well, at them he's angry.

Adam, he says, adam. The simple meaning is that adam is like "dibarti el bnei adam" (I spoke to people). Bnei adam can mean... the Rambam says that it says **"gam bnei adam gam bnei ish"** (both sons of adam and sons of ish). Bnei adam means people, the common folk, everyone. And ish is, as Rashi says, "ish" is a term of importance. So when he says "adam," he means most people for whom the Torah was written, the simple plain meaning of the Torah, they stumble, they make a mistake about the verses.

He says, **"v'ya'aleh al da'atam"** (and it occurs to them), they explain from the verses, they make the conclusion from the verses, **"she'haKadosh Baruch Hu gozer al ha'adam la'asot tovah o ra'ah"** (that the Holy One Blessed be He decrees upon a person to do good or evil), Hashem indeed decrees upon a person to be good or bad, **"v'she'ein libo shel adam masur lo l'hatoto l'chol asher yirtzeh"** (and that a person's heart is not given to him to bend it whichever way). A person doesn't have his own heart given into his hand to bend it which way. So it's a great question. The Rambam says, **"hareini meva'er ikar gadol"** (behold I will explain a great principle), he's going to explain a great principle, **"shemimenu teda peirush kol otam hapesukim"** (from which you will know the explanation of all those verses), that from this principle you will understand how one learns all these verses so it shouldn't look like a contradiction.

#### **The Great Principle: Free Choice Can Eliminate Itself**

I just want to first explain a bit the matter. What the Rambam is going to say is that there are times when a person has chosen, and after his choice has caused him to lose a bit of free choice. The Rambam puts it down as a punishment. But I think it's very clear, one must understand, the Rambam doesn't mean to say that Hashem doesn't love the righteous. He gives people punishments and makes them wicked before their open eyes.

What the Rambam means is simply to say, as we learned in Laws of Character Traits, in Laws of the Eight Chapters, always, as you also said earlier, when one says free choice one doesn't mean that a person can in one second become from Reuven to Moshe Rabbeinu. It means very clearly that

theoretically, every person is worthy in himself to become what he wants. But certainly, a person who habituates himself in bad habits, his punishment so to speak, but it's not a punishment simply not a punishment, not a nasty punishment, is that now he gets bad habits it becomes very difficult for him to return. Or sometimes indeed external things, conditions, a person doesn't have talents, or he doesn't have money, these are things that prevent him from being able to be a great Torah scholar. These are also things that he's not guilty of, Hashem is responsible for.

But what I mean to say is, when it says punishment one shouldn't think that it means that Hashem is going to punish, it means that this is the order. And conversely, the verses that you brought express this. That's in my opinion the simple meaning.

**Discussion: Free Choice Includes the Ability to Exclude Oneself**

**Speaker 2:**

I perhaps said it with a bit of a different expression. That a part of the power of free choice itself is that a person should also be able to do actions from which it's very difficult to return. Like for example, a person will say that a person also has a choice to take his life. But taking one's life is the final choice, because afterwards one cannot afterwards choose yes to live. Afterwards one doesn't have the choice, after one has taken one's life one doesn't have the choice yes to continue living.

So a person thinks to himself, "Ah, I have a choice, so I'll jump from the building." And after jumping from the building he says, "Hey, someone told me I have a choice." Yes, you had a choice to do also the final thing from which there's no way back. So a person does bad, he does bad, he does bad again, again, one tells him, "But you still have a choice." But eventually, after he does for I don't know what, for five years and he does bad and he does dangerous things, one tells him, "Mister, you're already at a point, you're doing so much bad or you're doing bad from which there's no way back." And that's not a contradiction to free choice, but on the contrary, that indeed explains more the power of free choice, that a person has a choice also to do such powerful things from which there's no way back.

**Speaker 1:**

Yes, very good. But then I'll ask you, why does the Rambam call it... not the Rambam, the Rambam wants to explain the verse. The verse calls it, sometimes one indeed says in the verse that you yourself sinned, sometimes when he has sinned so much one already says that Hashem did it. What comes in here Hashem? If you say that it's even more free choice...

**Speaker 2:**

I thought that he speaks earlier that Hashem means here the natural order. That is, this is already... a person can say, "I would have wanted, but he wanted as you wanted. I would have wanted to dance off a bridge and I can't go between... that must not come." That's already Hashem made it. Hashem made that the bridge is so high and the...

**Speaker 1:**

I didn't know what you said before that. I thought you were saying that Hashem, because that's the natural order. No one can oppose that. When one says that Hashem did it, means so, Hashem is avenged.

## **Continuation of Introduction: Free Choice and Punishment — The Concept of "Hashem Did It"**

### **The Concept of "Hashem Did It" — Natural Order**

**Speaker 1:**

Yes, very good. But then I must ask you, why does the Rambam call it that it's Hashem? And when the verse doesn't call it quickly, the Rambam will explain the verse. The verse calls it, sometimes one indeed says in the verse that you yourself sinned, sometimes when he has sinned so much one already says that Hashem did it. What comes in here Hashem? If you say that it's even more free choice?

I thought this answer, that "Hashem" means here the natural order. That is, this is already, a person can say, "I would have wanted, if we're speaking about what you wanted, certainly, I would have wanted to dance off a bridge and still be able to have regret in between." Then one cannot. That's already Hashem made it. Hashem made that the bridge is so high, and do you understand what I'm saying? Therefore it's called Hashem, because that's the natural order. That's not any opposition. When one says Hashem did it, means so Hashem placed into nature.

### **Parable of Addiction — Punishment That Looks Like Punishment**

And I would perhaps also say with a bit of such a twist. For example, a person enjoys very strongly to do a certain thing, and what happens afterwards is that he becomes addicted. After he's addicted, he no longer enjoys it. He no longer does it, because it looks like a punishment. Like a person unfortunately who smokes when he's already lying on a sickbed, it doesn't look at all like he continues to smoke, it unfortunately looks like he doesn't want to smoke, it's a punishment, it looks like a punishment. And so it is indeed, when a person is so immersed in sin, he no longer enjoys sin, he can't stop now, it no longer looks, there's no pleasure in it at all, it's already a punishment. The visual of it is very strong like a punishment. But the punishment is that so Hashem placed into creation, that a person can destroy himself.

Okay, so we've said enough of an introduction that one should contemplate when one now reads this Rambam.

---

## **Halacha 3: "When One Person or the People of a Country Sin..."**

### **The Concept of "Country" in the Rambam**

**Speaker 1:**

The Rambam says, "**bizman she'adam echad o anshei medinah...**" It's very interesting, the whole time the Rambam tells us here that there is such a thing as a medinah (state/country). People today have a lot of individualism, and people think that a medinah is just a collection of a bunch of people. There is such an entity called a medinah. The Rambam says either... *derech bnei adam* (the way of people) are influenced by their surroundings... that there is a punishment when one weighs each person, and one also weighs the city.

The medinah has such a strong power. People don't grasp how strongly subconsciously they do this. It's like the saying that someone says that a person is influenced by the five closest people around him, or by the medinah around him. But the medinah has a strong thing. A medinah means a city, but as he

first says this presumably because he's going to bring pesukim (verses) that one punishes the entire city.

### Speaker 2:

Yes, even more so, that is to say for example someone who lives in, I don't know, a refined Jew who lives in a medinah called Medinat Yisrael (the State of Israel). Whether he wants to or not, now the medinah is now such a kind of medinah that they can make certain decisions. You can't even do teshuva (repentance), but you are anyway, you are a part of that. So it could be that you will have a punishment on the medinah.

### Speaker 1:

The medinah doesn't mean according to the Rambam the dalet amot kedoshah (four sacred cubits), that you can run away to the desert, rather he means the society. As long as you are part of the society... even there are people who remove themselves from society. I say even more than you say. You say that it's only that you'll be influenced, so you'll get bad middot (character traits). But we say, the medinah decided to go to war. Who decided? I don't know. It could be that if there had been a different king it would have been different. But now, if the war is a chet (sin) and a punishment comes upon it, everyone will be influenced. Ah, you ask what about the tzaddikim shebetochah (righteous ones within it)? There are no tzaddikim shebetochah. A medinah is a thing that is true, you personally wouldn't have done the thing, but you are part of it. There is no...

### Question from Reb Yechiel Meir: Sodom and Amorah — Why Did the Innocent Sinners Die?

I saw someone asks an excellent question, which perhaps aroused me. Reb Yechiel Meir asks the question that he doesn't understand. There is what it says "ze'akah Sedom va'Amorah ki rabbah" (the outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great), yes? Why? Because there was some... innocent sinners. Yes? He asks, well, the innocent sinners also died when Sodom was overturned, true? Is that just? Why did Avraham Avinu cry out that perhaps there are ten tzaddikim? What's going on here?

Okay, I think the answer lies in what I said, but he says perhaps a different answer. But... I need to see what he says. It says that I say that there are such things in the medinah. The medinah is destroyed. The innocent sinners, they were also part of the wicked medinah. But they are the ones who suffer from their sin? Even so, that's why they suffer. Why did they suffer in the first place? Because they are part of a bad city. They should have run away. First of all, the Rambam's language is, they should have run away. Okay, not always can one. Well, says the Rambam, such is derech bnei adam (the way of people).

### "Chet she'oseh mida'ato uvirtzono" — The Distinction Between Bechirah and Da'at V'ratzon

#### Speaker 1:

He has the decision. **Chet, v'oseh chet chet she'oseh mida'ato uvirtzono**, he does the sin, initially, at least, at the very least temporarily, halachically it is **bivchinato**, and he does the sin **beda'ato uvirtzono**.

Why did the Rambam need to bring in the word bechirah (choice)? I think one needs to first explain what is the word bechirah. Okay, one needs to think what is the word bechirah different from the word da'at v'ratzon? There is a difference. When one understands the difference, one needs to make

philosophy to go into things that one doesn't have time for. But bechirah means the first decision, just as beda'ata uvirtzono is already the habit, is already the nature. I don't know, there is perhaps a distinction.

It's certain that when a person... It's not factual that a person is always choosing, just as a person estimates the whole time, he should do this, he should do that, and he makes a decision. Beda'ata uvirtzono is usually not such a strong conscious decision. Beda'ata uvirtzono means something else, it means a necessity that the ba'al habayit (master), on this I love the language harshut (the authority) that the Rambam says. Because the foundation says here that the achrayut (responsibility), the ba'al habayit on the ma'aseh (deed) is you, is the person himself. So you, yes, whoever it is. And this is a way of saying that it was birtzono (by his will), no one forced you, it's mida'at (with knowledge), not exactly bechirah. But the word bechirah can mean something else in the Rambam.

The Rambam indeed uses in a different context the word bechirah, and it means something else, and one can get confused. Bocher (to choose) to be batov (in good), what is bechirah he said? Bocher to be in better deeds? I don't remember. But for example, when a person makes a decision to be chozer beteshuva (return in repentance) or to be the opposite, to chozer (return) to al suro nacham al hara (regret the evil), that's called a bechirah. Bechirah means he weighs, I'll be a good person, I'll be a bad person, he chooses. Most of the time a person acts birtzono, because he's not a child that one forces him, he's an adult who can do things himself, but in truth there was no bechirah.

But let's hold to the Rambam's language, because it goes into my principle. To truly understand one needs to learn 24 sefarim (books) and so on. The Rambam was an expert in saying precisely what flows the whole thing, but we unfortunately turn other words and one says, but we don't understand what he says, we shout we go with him.

### Ra'uy Lehipara Mimenu — Punishment in This World

#### Speaker 1:

Very good. So the Rambam says that a person or a fool sins, he sins today, he is an oved avodah zarah (idolater) mida'at uvirtzono, and therefore because of this it is fitting that **ra'uy le'onashin**, one can give them punishments, just as the Rambam said earlier, that because there is a reshut (authority) for a person to do what he wants, means he bachar bo (chose it), and therefore there is a place for reward and punishment.

The Rambam says further, "**vehaKadosh Baruch Hu yode'a heichach ye'anish**". The Almighty knows how to punish. He says, says the Rambam, "**yesh chet shehaddin noten she'ein hapir'on mimenu ela chet ba'olam hazeh**". There are such types of sins that the justice, the din, says that the fitting punishment for this is that he receives his reward, his punishment for his sin ba'olam hazeh (in this world). How? "**begufo**", he receives in body, he receives yissurim (suffering) or such things, "**o bemamono, o bevanav haketanim**".

"**Shevanav shel adam haketanim she'ein bahem da'at velo higi'u lichlal mitzvot kinyanav hem.**" Why the simple meaning, the children are an external entry? He says no, as long as a person's children are small and they don't have developed da'at and they haven't reached klal hamitzvot (the category of commandments), they are called like a kinyan

(possession) of the father. Just as it says in the pasuk **"ish bechet'o yumat"** (a man shall die for his own sin). The Rambam explains, what does the Rambam say? That what it says, from when is "bechet'o yumat"? From when does a person die only for his own sins? **"Achar sheya'aseh ish"**, after he becomes his own man, when reward and punishment already applies to him himself.

#### Why Children Suffer — The Rambam's Answer

The Rambam gives here basically a small answer to the small question of what is the simple meaning that one sees small children die. The Rambam says that the main tzaar (pain) is the tzaar of the parents, and the child itself is not difficult. He doesn't say the word tzaar, he doesn't say tzaar. He says that the child doesn't belong to himself, he doesn't yet have da'at, therefore he doesn't belong to himself, but to someone he does belong. He belongs to the parents. He doesn't belong, I mean, in the sense that perhaps one can sell him, I mean a daughter one can sell, but a son one cannot sell. In any case, it's all, the fact is that he belongs to the father.

#### "Dino Noten" Is Bederech Hateva

And therefore there are certain punishments, certain sins, that let's understand, when the Rambam says reward and punishment, the first time one needs to think of things that are bederech hateva (in the natural way) like this, right? For example, a person doesn't work and he neglects, what do you call it, he neglects his house, whatever, his small children will die of hunger. One asks, they're not guilty. Precisely because they're not guilty, that's why they die. And when the father's sins, precisely because of this, when they would have been first, they would have needed to go themselves after money, make work, yes, they would have needed to earn themselves. But now like this, tachat yad aviv (under his father's hand), the father is guilty for both him and his children. That's how the world works. When one says whether it's fair or not, it's understood that many comes in fair, that's how the world works. If there are people who are a bit less natural, still it works in the same way. Your small children, precisely because they are under your da'at, that's why they are under your da'at, and the father is the one who decides whether it should go well or badly.

Okay, let's not focus, but the Rambam doesn't focus on the question of whether it's fair or not. The Rambam just throws in that many times among the punishments ba'olam hazeh is the body of the person, the money of the person, or the young children of the person which is a part of him.

#### Three Categories of Punishment

##### Speaker 1:

**"Veyesh chet acher shedino noten sheyipara mimenu le'olam haba, ve'ein alav shum nezek ba'olam hazeh."** And there is a third category, **"veyesh chet shenifra'im mimenu ba'olam hazeh uva'olam haba."** Can you make a new number? **"Veyesh chet shenifra'im mimenu bishneihem."** There is a sin that one receives punishments ba'olam hazeh uva'olam haba (in this world and the next world). Very good.

#### What Does "Dino Noten" Mean — It Depends on What One Damages

It seems to me that the Rambam means here something like this, the three categories of punishments he wants to bring out something, and I don't yet know what. It looks good, he's

holding in the middle of the calculation of life... Yes, he wants to bring out here something very important. I think the "dino noten", I say, the "dino noten" means that it depends, you can say like this, it depends on what you are pogem (damaging), for example. Someone is pogem in his da'at, perhaps he loses olam haba. Someone is pogem only in his... devarim shebaguf (physical matters). Some secret surely lies here. Just the Rambam comes here to say hilchot schar ve'onesh (laws of reward and punishment), there are different stages.

#### Source for the Three Distinctions

##### Speaker 2:

There is a Mishnah, yes, it says exclusively on aveirot (transgressions), I remember, it says on the... one says in the Peri, yes, there is "devarim she'adam ochel peiroteihem ba'olam hazeh" (things whose fruits a person eats in this world), there are the three distinctions bemitzvot (in commandments), but it seems that by aveirot there is also. What is the source for this? There are things that one receives reward ba'olam hazeh, there is on both, there is on naraf even habad, do you remember that there is such a source for this? It doesn't bring, interesting.

##### Speaker 1:

Ah, there is yes, and Peah, the same things, nifra'im mul dodam mezet, what turn kemat le'olam haba, one sees there, there are things, one receives punishments on both worlds. There are three things there, says the Rambam and further, by lamer's, by lamer's, by lamer's, on this one receives punishments on both worlds.

#### Teshuva Katris Bifnei HaPur'anut — Explanation of the Verses That Seem to Contradict the Principle of Free Will

##### Halacha 6 (Continued) — Teshuva Katris Bifnei HaPur'anut

Ah, there is yes. In Peah, the same things. **"Eilu devarim she'adam ochel peiroteihen ba'olam hazeh vehakeren kayemet lo le'olam haba"**. One sees there that there are things that one receives punishments on both worlds. There are the three types of things.

The Rambam says further, **"bameh devarim amurim? That which one receives punishments is only said bizman shelo asah teshuva, aval im asah teshuva, harei teshuva katris lifnei hapur'anut"**. Teshuva is like armor. This is very nice, because one can look at it that when he did teshuva, no punishment comes to him.

But it seems that there are also things where the punishment is natural. Just as if a person, let's say, a person fights with everyone, a person turns around and he fights people and he steals from people, and the punishment is natural that it comes back to him, he becomes a nirdaf (pursued) and one goes to catch him. But even on this, teshuva will be like it will stop him, it's armor, it will stop the natural punishments from happening to him.

Just as let's say, a person transgresses "venishmartem me'od lenafshoteichem" (guard yourselves very much), and the punishment will be that he will become sick. But if he does teshuva, he will have armor. Again, I mean he will take a refuah (cure), but it will help, the current teshuva will help him protect from pur'anut (calamity).

#### Teshuva Uma'asim Tovim Katris Bifnei HaPur'anut

The Rambam brings in the Mishnah, says very nicely, it says in the Mishnah **"teshuva uma'asim tovim katris bifnei hapur'anut"**. The Rambam says, teshuva is if one has already sinned, and ma'asim tovim is lechatchilah (from the outset). There are two ways of not having pur'anut: either one doesn't sin lechatchilah, or if one has already sinned, one should do teshuva.

#### **Teshuva Birtzono Uveda'ato**

The Rambam says, **"keshem she'adam chotei birtzono uveda'ato"** — just as we discussed that the matter of sin is because a person has ratzon and da'at and he chooses his deeds — **"kach hu oseh teshuva birtzono uveda'ato"**. Also the same thing, teshuva must be the same kind of thing as sin, that a person made a decision or he has a ratzon to do something, and the same thing teshuva is that he has a ratzon to no longer sin, and his da'at tells him that he should no longer sin.

He brings out a principle the Rambam, one shouldn't think that teshuva is something yotzei min haklal (exceptional). Perhaps there are pesukim, apparently he's going to see soon, there are pesukim that say that the Almighty makes one do teshuva also. He says, first of all you should know a principle, when one sins a punishment comes, if you sinned with da'at, you yourself are responsible, you should do teshuva. Teshuva is not the Almighty makes you do teshuva, you yourself did teshuva, therefore you get the payment of pur'ania.

#### **Halacha 5 — The Punishment of Prevention of Teshuva**

Now, now one comes finally to the answer to the question. How, **"ve'efshar"**, yes, says the Rambam, **"ve'efshar sheyecheta adam chet gadol o chata'im rabbim"**, it's possible that a person will do a great sin or several sins, **"ad sheyiten haddin lifnei dayyan ha'emet"**, that the din is in a way that the din noteh (inclines). The Rambam wants to say here that it's very complicated, you can't say in advance what will happen from each thing, rather the Almighty knows.

#### **Discussion: What Does "Sheyiten Haddin Lifnei Dayyan Ha'emet" Mean?**

And it's interesting, the din noteh, for whom does the din incline? For dayyan ha'emet? As if the Almighty is the great judge, and the da'at is like there becomes the kategor (prosecutor) or the sanegor (defender), yes? That which we said earlier in Chovot HaLevavot. The pamalya shel ma'aloh (heavenly entourage) of the Almighty here is the da'at.

**Speaker 2:** I say, the din noteh means to say that this is correct. The yosher (justice) says before the Almighty...

**Speaker 1:** Ah, okay, you're already going into deep investigations that one doesn't have... No, I mean to say that this is correct. The dimyon (image) that he says, the mashal (parable) that he says, that the Almighty decides, but He decides that it's correct that He should decide. The Almighty is the one who knows, not the Almighty decides, the Almighty can't decide that something that isn't correct should be correct. The Almighty knows what is correct.

Al pi hadin (according to the law), the din noteh lifnei dayyan ha'emet, that dayyan emet means to say that we don't know what the din is, because we don't understand precisely what the din is for each thing. But it could be, precisely each din, for which sin comes which type of punishment al pi din.

#### **The Punishment: Prevention of Teshuva**

There are certain sins that on this the din says, on this the yosher says, **that yeha onsham shel zeh hachotei hachata'im eilu she'asah birtzono veda'ato**, that the punishment for the sin that he did all these sins birtzono veda'ato should be like this, **shemon'in mimenu hateshuva**, the punishment for this should be that one prevents from him teshuva. **Ve'ein mani'in lo reshut lashuv merisho**, one doesn't give him reshut lashuv merisho (permission to return from his wickedness).

Reshut means one doesn't leave him over anymore his own reshut. Usually, earlier he said that ma'asav shel adam is bireshuto (in his authority), libo shel adam is bireshuto, reshut netunah lo (permission is given to him). There are certain sins that the middat hadin (attribute of justice) says on this that the punishment for this must be that one should lose the reshut lashuv merisho, and the person remains already trapped in his sins, **kedei sheyamut**, this is already the preparation for the greater punishment, **kedei sheyamut veyovad becheto she'asah**, he should die with the sins.

#### **Example of Hitler**

#### **Lecture on Teshuva (Repentance) - Part 3**

That is, if you want to say it in terms of reward and punishment, not in the way that I hold is the truth, it means to say this: Teshuva (repentance) seemingly is an answer to pnimiyus (inner essence). Teshuva seemingly helps for everyone. There is someone who is a Hitler, he murdered six million Jews. Afterwards he will come and say, "I want to do teshuva." What can one say to this person? What is the din emes (true judgment)? The din emes is what? Teshuva? The din emes is that one should not let him do teshuva. Not to say, "Your teshuva is..." The din emes is, "You cannot do teshuva. You should remain a rasha (wicked person)." "Ah, I want to do teshuva." "We will make sure that you cannot want to do teshuva." This is already the preparation to die earlier. You will die as a rasha and you will go to Gehinnom or whatever the Olam Haba (World to Come). This is the...

#### **Halacha 6 — Explanation of the Verses: Isaiah 6:10**

Very good. Says the Rambam, **"This is what the Holy One Blessed Be He said through Isaiah."** Here he brings the verses that bothered him. He says, now you will understand that the verses that are written are not a contradiction to the entire Torah of reward and punishment which is based on the free will of man, rather it fits with the Torah that I say here, that there are sometimes certain sins that take away the free will of man. But it is certainly that he brings this as verses that fit best with the explanation that he has given.

He says, regarding this it is written through Isaiah the prophet, the Almighty says to Isaiah the prophet such a prophecy, He says to him, **"Make the heart of this people fat"** — the heart of the people has become very fat, and make it, it will become, "Make it fat" it should become, **"and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes"** — and their ears will become very heavy, and their eyes will not be able to see. Why? **"Lest they see with their eyes"** — because the Almighty says thus: The Jews have sinned very much, and the punishment will be that their heart will become more heavy, it will become more fat.

#### **The Parable of a Fat Heart**

It is very interesting, when a person is very fat, it disturbs his heart from operating, because it lays upon the heart. But here

this is such a parable, that the heart of man is in his control. He says, that the punishment for the sins that the Jews have done is that their heart will become heavy, their ears will become heavy, their eyes will not be able to see.

Why? "Lest" — because normally a person always has the opportunity that he should see freshly with his eyes. A person, for example, has done sins for which he does not yet deserve the punishment that the Rambam holds here in the middle of saying. So what happens? That after doing sins he sees with his eyes and he hears with his ears mussar (moral instruction), and with his heart he understands that he has done wrong, and in his heart he makes a good decision to do teshuva, **"and return and be healed"** — and he does teshuva and he becomes healed.

But says the Almighty, that for the Jews the punishment will be that their heart will become fat, they will not have the opportunity.

It fits very well. Says the Rambam, but this is a punishment for a sin that they have done, that they have lost the free will of man, that their eyes and ears and heart is open to be able to always accept the true mussar.

**Discussion: The Plain Meaning in the Verse — Punishment or Rebuke?**

**Speaker 2:** Very good. That is to say, it is like "harden the heart of Pharaoh," he was told the same language, yes? That the person's heart, meaning his understanding or his... he will receive his mussar and the like. And he will not be able to receive his mussar and the like.

**Speaker 1:** And similarly **"and they mocked the messengers of God."** I believe in both ways that this is not the simple plain meaning in this verse, and the Rambam says that this is the plain meaning, and in my humble opinion it doesn't mean that. But the Rambam learns this as the plain meaning in the verse, which is not a question, he could have written differently. Let us now learn the Rambam, and we will say that the Rambam meant to say that he means to frighten the people. He says, "Behold, are you so blocked, perhaps you are so afraid to do teshuva? Perhaps you are afraid to grasp that you must do teshuva?" Well, he doesn't mean that one should not do teshuva, he means that one should.

**Speaker 2:** No, the Rambam is also not learning the plain meaning that it is final, this is the rebuke. That if you continue to go on this way with this doing, in the end it will be "make the heart of this people fat." One must see precisely the verses. But the Rambam says clearly that this is a reality, when the heart becomes too strongly fat one will not do teshuva.

**Speaker 1:** I know that the verse means that the Almighty did this. The Rambam perhaps wants to say that this will be the punishment. It could be the verse means, as you wanted to interpret that it means in the past, I mean that it means in the future, but the verse means that it will happen this way because you don't hold by it. Perhaps this is your sin. I don't know how the Rambam found clearly that this is the punishment.

**Speaker 2:** Okay, this is the question, whether the Rambam when he says here "punishment," means to say that it is a kind of sin, because this is the result of the sin, as we discussed earlier. A person has a sin for which one doesn't need a thing a way back. You have done this, and consequently it has happened to you. It is already a thing that you have not done.

**Speaker 1:** The main thing that he says from this verse is that after a person does sins for a long time, he loses the power to be able to open his eyes, and it is not a contradiction with his free choice. A person, as one says, "dulls the heart," and the dullness of the heart makes it harder for him to do teshuva.

**Halacha 6 (Continued) — Verse from Chronicles: "And they mocked the messengers of God"**

**Speaker 1:** Okay, let's go further. **"And similarly,"** so it is written in the verse, **"and they mocked the messengers of God."** About whom does one say this? About Jews who did sins. This is a verse in Chronicles. About whom? About the Jews in the time of Jeremiah. The Jews in the times of Jeremiah did sins.

They tormented Jeremiah the prophet, so they did not want to accept his messengers of God. They mocked the messengers of God, they went after the false prophets. **"And despised His words,"** one shamed his words. **"And scoffed at His prophets,"** one made an error, one mocked around, one did not take the prophets seriously, or they "gaslight" them, which "scoffed" usually means mocked around, one confused the prophets, **"until there arose" —**

**Halacha 6 (Continued) — The Matter of "Until There Was No Remedy" and Pharaoh's Hardening of Heart**

**The Rambam's Words: "Until There Was No Remedy" — Losing the Power of Teshuva**

**Speaker 1:**

No, they tormented Jeremiah the prophet, that they did not want to accept his messengers of God. They mocked the messengers of God, they went after the false prophets.

What does it mean until there was no more remedy?

Says the Rambam, the matter, **"a person sins willingly and increases to transgress,"** the verse counts here three expressions of sin that they all did, serious sins, for which there was the wrath of Hashem, the punishment for this was **"he became obligated to prevent from him the teshuva which is a remedy,"** as it is written earlier **"and return and be healed,"** teshuva is a remedy for the soul.

He says that the punishment for so many times "mocking the messengers of God," also three times, yes, by three times one gets a chazaka (presumption), they have already become established in sin, and it becomes **"until there was no remedy,"** they will no longer be able to find a way for teshuva, they will no longer have free will.

**Question on the Rambam's Proof from This Verse**

One also need not be afraid to come to that the verse speaks of this, but okay, I perhaps don't want to challenge the Rambam, it is written in the verses now, I also know nothing. Because you can say "no remedy" means that there will be such a trouble that there is no remedy. The Rambam has learned in here the matter of teshuva, there is not written in the word any word teshuva. Perhaps because it is written earlier **"and return and be healed."**

But you see indeed, **"the wrath of Hashem arose,"** there will come such wrath and punishments **"with no remedy,"** that one will not be able to heal. Instead, it came, as it is written further, that the king of the Chaldeans came and killed all the Jews, one could no longer hold them back, as long as they were outside one could still hold war, as long as the wall was by him.

But the Rambam has learned in that the "remedy" means here **"and return and be healed,"** the remedy of teshuva.

#### Answer — The Mechanism of Losing the Power of Teshuva

But you can still even learn this that it is not against the plain meaning of Scripture, because Jeremiah the prophet comes to rebuke the king that he should quickly change, he should quickly not think that he can fight with the nations, rather he should deal differently. And a part of the punishment is this, that they should continue to mock the prophets, and indeed lose the power to be able to do the right thing.

#### Speaker 2:

Yes, Jeremiah the prophet wants to say to the prophets that he should save himself, he can still save from the decree.

#### Speaker 1:

No, but the verse is not written here so, on the contrary, the verse says... Let us understand, it is very funny. The two verses that the Rambam will bring in the next piece, the **"I will harden the heart of Pharaoh,"** are exactly the verses that the Rambam is referring to. And there it is not written the foundation that the Rambam is referring to find, that it is because they did not want to do teshuva.

What is written in the verses? On the contrary, the Jews are themselves guilty, the Almighty sent prophets to warn them, and they did not obey, they did not want to do teshuva. They could have done teshuva. The Rambam must here somewhere find that they could not do teshuva.

#### Speaker 2:

Right, **"until there was no remedy"** means that until the last... yes, friend, you say that even when they would have still been able to do teshuva, they have already lost the power to do teshuva. That is, let's say, Jeremiah warns Zedekiah and the Jews several times, and so many times they mocked him, that they have already lost the power to start taking him seriously. This was their punishment.

#### Speaker 1:

It looks a verse earlier, a verse after, it is written explicitly, **"and he stiffened his neck,"** and Zedekiah himself hardened his neck, not that the Almighty demanded **"and I will harden the heart of Pharaoh."** It is not written so. If it would have been written that the Almighty hardened the heart of Zedekiah, it would have already been a punishment, the Rambam would have had a good proof. But it is not written that. The Almighty simply had another...

#### Speaker 2:

The "no remedy," the "no remedy." Or as it is written there **"lest he return and be healed."** There **"and be healed"** is very clear. **"And be healed"** means he should be able to do teshuva, and he says **"make the heart of this people fat... lest... he return and be healed,"** he should not be able to do teshuva.

**Distinction Between "His Judgment Was Sealed" and "Teshuva Was Prevented From Him"**

#### Speaker 1:

I would have thought, even if he is prevented from teshuva, it is already like there is a concept of "his judgment was sealed." Yes, it is also written in... in... in the book... in... the prophet comes out that... not in the book of Chronicles, Chronicles is written seemingly differently, but in... what is it called, in the book of Kings, it comes out that actually later it became better,

but the sin of Menashe still remained, and because of this came the destruction. There is such a thing that the judgment was sealed.

But this is not the same as the Rambam. The Rambam wants to say that the way how the judgment was sealed is through the fact that they could not do teshuva. It is a different thing.

#### The Rambam Regarding Pharaoh — "And I Will Harden the Heart of Pharaoh"

Says the Rambam further, **"Therefore..."** I am afraid that I think that the Rambam that you said is correct, but the proof from the verse seems to me somewhat a weak proof.

And he says the Rambam further, **"Because he sinned of his own accord initially,"** now the Rambam goes further to the well-known verses with the Torah of Pharaoh. It is written in the Torah **"and I will harden the heart of Pharaoh"** or **"and I will harden his heart."** So what is this? I will harden the heart of Pharaoh? This means that Pharaoh will no longer have the power to be able to do teshuva?

#### "Come, Let Us Deal Wisely With Him" — Wickedness With Knowledge

Says the Rambam... It is an interesting thing, because Pharaoh did in the end do teshuva. He expelled the Jews, he sent out the Jews. And the **"I will harden the heart of Pharaoh"** is that he should not send out the Jews. In the end in the end he did. That is, the Almighty can control it. It is interesting. That is, after it was decreed upon Pharaoh, he still had. The Almighty withdrew the decree of judgment and did let him in the end. Especially with the Midrashim that it is written that Pharaoh survived and did teshuva. But this is already Midrashim.

But what is written here **"and I will harden the heart of Pharaoh,"** says the Rambam, **"because he sinned of his own accord initially,"** he sinned, **"and did evil to Israel who were strangers in his land,"** he did harm to the Jews who were strangers in his land, **"as it is said,"** and with this he transgressed the prohibition of **"and you shall love the stranger,"** yes, all these things, one must love, one must be nice to immigrants.

**"As it is said,"** no, I go further from the strangers in his land, **"as it is said, 'Come, let us deal wisely with him,'"** it is written in the verse that what he did, **"Come, let us deal wisely with him."** The Rambam says very nicely, **"Come, let us deal wisely with him"** is wickedness with knowledge. He uses his wisdom, he makes a decision. He makes a decision, **"Come, let us deal wisely with him,"** let us think a strategy with his will, with his choice, with his knowledge, to harm the Jews.

#### The Punishment Is Not Forever — "Until Retribution Is Taken From Him"

**"The judgment was given,"** through this comes to him a just punishment, because he did it with wisdom, with knowledge. **"The judgment was given,"** came upon him the judgment, the justice, **"to prevent from him the teshuva until retribution is taken from him,"** to take away the teshuva until one will be able to get from him the punishment. The teshuva was not forever. Once he received the punishment, it should come ten plagues, afterwards it is already finished, he can already do teshuva.

#### Pharaoh's "Distance Greatly" Moment

#### Speaker 2:

No, it is interesting, because what we discussed earlier that a person loses many times the power to do teshuva, and this is a part of his sin, is also here the "distance greatly." Pharaoh had somewhat some moment of "distance greatly," which then was already his punishment.

And then he was already not in the ability to do teshuva.

#### Speaker 1:

It is interesting, people many times sin, and they lose the power to stop sinning. Somewhere there is like a moment of... yes, you speak of addiction, but we are all in this situation in many ways.

#### The Rambam's Question and Answer — Why Does the Almighty Send Moses to Pharaoh?

**"Therefore, the Holy One Blessed Be He hardened his heart."**

Says the Rambam further: **"And why was He sending to him through Moses and saying to him send out and do teshuva?"**

Ah, we struggled why we learn on the eve of Pesach laws of teshuva. The Rambam says, Moses our teacher tried the whole time to bring Pharaoh to repentance. He knew that the Almighty said that it will not work, but in practice, this was the mission. It is like every prophet, all the prophets, says the Rambam, all the prophets are built on teshuva. Also the prophecy of Moses was to try to bring Pharaoh to repentance.

#### Moses Our Teacher's Mission as a Teshuva Mission

But why? **"And why was He sending to him through Moses and saying to him send out and do teshuva?"** If so, why does He send Moses our teacher to Pharaoh the whole time and he says to him, "Yes, send out the Jews and do teshuva," when He knows? **"And the Holy One Blessed Be He already told him that he is not sending out."** The Almighty already told him.

To Moses our teacher or to Pharaoh himself? Here he brings a verse that he says to Pharaoh himself, but the Almighty said to Moses in the beginning, **"and I will harden the heart of Pharaoh."** It is not... But here he brings, **"and you and your father I knew."** Ah, I mean that the Rambam... before before... ah, ah, sorry, the Rambam seemingly here... ah, it is written further, **"and for this cause have I made you stand, to show you My power."** I know that you will withdraw. **"And that My name may be declared throughout all the earth."** It is one long thing. **"And that My name may be declared throughout all the earth"** is for the... But the Rambam puts together the two verses to say that Moses our teacher was himself the question, and he already answered the answer. And he also said it to Pharaoh. I know that you will withdraw from the Jews, and I will make a punishment on you. **"And that My name may be declared throughout all the earth"** is written a bit earlier, right? It must be. Yes.

#### Innovation in the Plain Meaning of "And That My Name May Be Declared Throughout All the Earth"

He says, interesting. So what is the plain meaning of the contradiction? The Rambam is not particular to bring verses retroactively, but he brings... It is a continuation of the same... exactly the same portion. One is before, one is a word. Anyway, this is the answer. **"And that My name may be declared throughout all the earth,"** this is the answer to the question.

In other words, **"kedei lehodiya levai olam"**, to make known to those who come into the world, **"shebizman shemonei'a HaKadosh Baruch Hu teshuva lachotei eino yachol lashuv"**. To make known precisely this halacha, this thing that the Rambam says here, that there are many times a punishment for a sin that the Almighty takes away the ability of teshuva, **"ve'eino yachol lashuv ela yamus berishyo she'asa batechila birtzono"**. He will die with the wickedness that he did initially of his own will.

And with Moshe Rabbeinu coming to bring this out clearly, with the coming of mussar and seeing that Pharaoh doesn't follow the mussar, one sees this thing, that because Pharaoh chose evil, did evil birtzono berishuto, I'm already afraid to use the word "chose," he truly cannot. All those times that... because in the pesukim it's very strange, he has punishments, he has blood, frogs, lice, all these things, the tzachad"sh bacha"v, and he doesn't do teshuva. And with Moshe Rabbeinu coming the whole time to tell him he should do teshuva and he can't help himself, one sees here very clearly that this is what Pharaoh suffered from this syndrome of losing the reshut shel adam.

#### Chiddush — The Lesson of Pharaoh is Hilchos Teshuva in General

Let me clarify something, something bothers me. In other words, I once thought that **"uva'avur zos he'emadticha"** means to say that the Almighty wanted to make an example of Pharaoh what happens **before** one sins so much that they can no longer do teshuva.

The Rambam says no. The Almighty wanted to make an example of Pharaoh what happens **when** one sins so much that he cannot do teshuva.

The other lesson. The lesson is Hilchos Teshuva in general, not Hilchos Vidui of the Jews. It's not simple pshat. Simple pshat says **"lema'an saper es kochi"**. No, the Rambam says, because if that's the case the question is difficult why doesn't the Rambam bring it. Once one explains it this way, I don't know exactly, it's not missing the whole... Also the Rambam has, the Almighty makes a decree, it's also difficult what the Rambam asked earlier. The Rambam asked earlier, he says like this, it's an ofen acher lekayem mitzvas teshuva,

#### Hilchos Teshuva Chapter 6 – Continuation: Examples of Prevention of Teshuva as Punishment

##### Sichon King of Cheshbon

**The Rambam's words: "Vechen Sichon, lefi avonos shehayu lo nischayev limno'a mimenu hateshuva, shene'emar ki hiksha Hashem Elokecha es rucho"**

The other lesson is the Hilchos Teshuva in general, not the halachos of how to organize Jews. It's not simple pshat. Pshat says "lema'an saper shemi", no. The Rambam says because if now, it's a question on the Rambam, why did the Almighty have to punish him one more time. I'm already exact, it's not missing the whole... Also the Almighty made a decree. It's also difficult what the Rambam asked earlier. The Rambam already said earlier a yesod, that if a prophet comes to tell you to do teshuva, and the pshat is that you can't, what does the prophet do? The prophet comes, lehodiya the yesod that sometimes one cannot do teshuva.

#### Digression: Shabbos HaGadol and Shabbos Teshuva – Two Parts of Teshuva

It's very interesting, there is Shabbos HaGadol and Shabbos Teshuva, both are drashos that the rav gives a drasha, but Shabbos HaGadol is also teshuva. Because what does one speak about? One speaks about all the makos. What are all the makos? It's a chapter in Hilchos Teshuva. This is even more me'orer. Because a good pshat that one can say, a Shabbos HaGadol one says that what still depends on bechira chofshis shel ha'adam that he should do teshuva? On the contrary, it's teshuva. A Shabbos HaGadol one speaks of the things that are not bireshuso shel adam. First of all one must know the reason, and secondly, one thanks for this.

What did the Almighty take us out of Egypt? That He gave us the opportunity to be the opposite, that is indeed the miracle, that we can now yes do teshuva. That is indeed the opposite, just as the Rambam will say. One tells him, if you didn't listen to the Shabbos Teshuva drasha... No, in Chassidic sefarim it says that this is more hisorerus dile'eila. But what does hisorerus dile'eila mean in the Rambam's way? That sometimes the Almighty gives a person an opportunity, He gives him the siyata dishmaya, the seichel, or the external drive. Through this he can yes do teshuva. That is indeed Yetzias Mitzrayim.

What is Yetzias Mitzrayim? That now we yes have a certain possibility to be better. It's the pleasure, it's ma'aseh Hashem, not ma'aseh bnei adam. It's not the bechira, it's the part of teshuva, but this is the hoda'ah of the ten makos etc. It's also already a Shabbos HaGadol drasha as well.

#### **Back to Sichon – The Question of "Lema'an Tito Beyadecha"**

Rabbosai, whoever learns only Chumash like us who go to cheder, that we don't fulfill the halacha of learning all the Nevi'im and Kesuvim, doesn't know that Pharaoh wasn't the only one about whom it says "vayechazek Hashem es lev". He will bring more from Chumash. True, there is another pasuk in Chumash, and I won't remember it now, but there is. Okay, it will be worse. There were two more people about whom it says in a serious pasuk the same language that "hiksheh es rucham" and the like. These are Sichon and the Canaanites in the days of Yehoshua, that is indeed in the pesukim that say the same thing.

The Rambam will say the same answer on both. The Rambam says, **vechen Sichon, lefi avonos shehayu lo nischayev limno'a mimenu hateshuva**. He says a whole, he says nischayev. That means the aveiros were such types of aveiros that brought the result that the punishment for this must be to take away from him teshuva. Nischayev means like the nosa, right? The same language. Nischayev means that it caused. The aveiros caused limno'a hateshuva. According to my understanding, or perhaps nischayev means that he became nischayev? Nischayev sachar ve'onesh. Okay. **Lefi avonos shehayu lo nischayev limno'a mimenu hateshuva, shene'emar "ki hiksha Hashem Elokecha es rucho"**.

But what is the proof here? What are you asking how does this fit? Rather it's a proof with the same approach as until now, that it was a result of his aveiros.

**Speaker 2:** Yes, how is the answer although on Pharaoh is, the Rambam brings a good proof from Nevuchadnetzar, but on Sichon we don't know any more information about what his aveira was. And also in the pasuk it says a different reason. The pasuk says "lema'an tito beyadecha".

**Speaker 1:** So, in any case, this is another point. I'm not sure that the Rambam is concerned with the simple meaning of the pasuk either. But you're saying that it contradicts the Rambam. May I ask?

**Speaker 2:** It says by Pharaoh one sees clearly the ma'aseh, the Almighty wanted to accept teshuva, he wanted mechila.

**Speaker 1:** Okay, hear what the Rambam says. Okay, that's not the same topic. Okay, I'm just telling you that it's not so simple in the Rambam's pshat.

#### **Answer: Two Parts – Tachlis and Ofen**

**Speaker 2:** Vechen haKena'anim, yes? Indeed Egypt was also the main tachlis "lema'an yede'u kol amei ha'aretz", "lema'an tesaper be'oznei bincha uven bincha".

**Speaker 1:** But the part of the knowledge that he lost his reshuv to turn back, on this there is the answer. The same thing is with Sichon. The answer is there what will be that the Jews will receive his territory. But this that he didn't answer, how does this fit? Because he did aveiros and nischayev limno'a mimenu hateshuva. Perhaps one can hold the head on more than one thing at once...

#### **The Canaanites in the Days of Yehoshua**

So now, now I'll read the Rambam.

**Speaker 2:** No, the cherem... but since the Rambam, kedei there, there the Rambam said, the Rambam translated there, they could already bring the previous reason. The Rambam has their opinion is not the opinion of knowledge. Different from what the pasuk says, can it but at least he translated it somehow. Perhaps this also that one should...

**Speaker 1:** This the Rambam says further, **"vechen haKena'anim, haKena'anim mimei Yehoshua, yes, the same thing, pisa osam vesiyam ba'avur to'evoseihem va'avonoseihem, shehayu monim mehem hateshuva ad she'asu milchama im Yisrael"**. He means a language here that is interesting. It means like you just said something, they were prevented teshuva until they should have a war, they lost the war. Otherwise they could have done teshuva before, the whole plan of Sefer Yehoshua wouldn't have succeeded. Yes, **"ad she'asu milchama im Yisrael, vene'enshu ki ma'aseh Hashem haysa zos lehachazik es libam likras hamilchama es Yisrael lema'an hacharimam"**.

It's interesting, because there it says clearly, there it says "lema'an hacharimam", there it says "lo hosiru ir asher hishlama el bnei Yisrael". That means, there would have been an option for them, that they could have made peace, done teshuva, it would have been good for them. But the Almighty didn't want, the Almighty specifically wanted them to lose the war, because they had already sinned so much before, it would have been an option...

You can also say it a bit more, the way I learned it, that clever of them would have been that they should see the situation and yes, at least there should be made a few cities that should make a decision that it's worthwhile to make peace. Nu, why not? So it was that this was part of their punishment, because they had been until now to'evos. The Rambam says that to'evos, perhaps they haven't yet really... the war was the beginning of their aveira against the Jews, but they had other to'evos. He says indeed to'evos, avoda zara. They had to'evos of avoda zara, other to'evos. But until now it was meni'a baden, they weren't meni'a baden. They also paid the price with the Jews, when they had the "hacharimam". But in the end, they

were in a condition, they were before in some situation that did this.

One can see the wisdom of reality, that there is a nation that they go into some stubbornness, it has some whole ma'aseh why, and the chet that prevents them from doing teshuva.

**Speaker 2:** You mean Iran? I don't mean that one must anyone.

**Speaker 1:** The Rambam says further, "vechen Yisrael..." I'm just showing that it's a normal thing.

**Speaker 2:** The Almighty says already, but it's not by a state, rather by a person. A normal thing, he goes into some process that he becomes fooled. Ma'aseh bechol yom, people who come to me, he's already fighting with his wife for ten years, and the punishment for this is that he'll fight with her for another ten years.

### Yisrael in the Days of Eliyahu

**Speaker 1:** The Rambam says, "**vechen Yisrael umimei Eliyahu**".

Yes, the same thing. "Yisrael", the Jews in the times of Eliyahu HaNavi... yes, it's a difficult pasuk, "Yisrael umimei Eliyahu". There in the ma'aseh with Achav, yes, is "umimei Eliyahu"? What did they do so much peshah, sinned so much? "Mone'a mehem hateshuva". That is, **lefi shehirbu lifshoa**, the Almighty prevented teshuva, **shene'emar "ve'ata hasibosa es libam achoranis"**. Eliyahu says to the Almighty, "You turned their heart backward", instead of them going forward, doing teshuva, opening their eyes. **Kelomar, "mana'tam min hateshuva"**. This was their punishment for their abundance of sins.

### The Rambam's Conclusion – "Nimtzeis Omer"

Okay. **Nimtzeis omer, she'ein HaKadosh Baruch Hu gozer al Pharaoh lehara leYisrael**. The Almighty didn't decree on Pharaoh that he should do evil to Jews, because that would have been a great question. No, Pharaoh himself did evil to Jews, he himself was borer, and he himself did it beda'as.

**Speaker 2:** Ah, until when the first time he...

**Speaker 1: "Ela le'orech kol haderech"**. Not pshat that first he did it himself and afterwards he was forced. No, the whole time. Aye, why didn't he himself do teshuva? Here there is already perhaps a hergel that prevented him. But the whole time he himself is guilty.

### Discussion: The Difference Between Bechira, Ratzon, and Ones – Three Stages

**Speaker 2:** Like one asks the question, they spoke about this... I now have... they spoke in Shemonah Perakim the question, if one says that every time is a hergel, then the second time the person shouldn't already be guilty. It's indeed Acharonim who cry about this, yes? If a person is only chayav when he is borer, yes, then why the second time he does the same thing does he get a punishment? He doesn't have any bechira.

**Speaker 1:** The answer is indeed, this is the answer, the difference of bechira and biratzon uveda'as. It can be he wasn't borer, but it's still biratzon. He himself made himself such a person, he made himself such a person who now does with da'as and with ratzon this. It's indeed the whole time he had ratzon. This is pshat what it says that it's biratzon.

The Almighty says "hiksha es libo" is only that he was already in such a stage that he already couldn't go back.

But it's very interesting, the stages that you say is very nicely said. Let's say, the first ten times that a person does something he is borer. The second thirty times he is already biratzon uvirtzono. And the last thirty times he is already, this is already the punishment, one can already not turn back.

But everything is biratzon uvirtzono. It can't be ones. Even when it says "hiksha es libo", doesn't mean that it became ones from a certain stage. He was still biratzon. Rather the whole thing, when you look from outside you can see, he's already in a stage that it's very difficult to go back, or he can't go back at all.

### The Rambam's Summary

On the other hand, the nations of the world, "**ki lo gazar al Pharaoh lehara leYisrael, velo al Sichon lachato be'artzo, velo al haKena'anim lehis'aiv be'artzam**" – it's interesting, "lehis'aiv" is a language of po'el, to do to'eva, to be engaged in to'eva and filth, to defile oneself with to'eva, I know, baseness – "**velo al Yisrael la'avod avoda zara, ela kulam chat'u me'atzman venischayvu kulam**". And from their sin came out the result, and they became mechuyav "**lefikach mana min hahem hateshuva**".

Here it is indeed implied that he's speaking of the first stage, "lachato be'artzo", because after it's already "lachato beYisrael", it's already yes perhaps been the "mana mehem hateshuva".

### Beginning of the Second Part – Tefilla for Teshuva

Now, one has finished with the bad part, with how a person sins so much and he loses the reshut shel adam to turn back and begin to do good. But now the Rambam will speak about the opposite part, when one sees so often that one asks the Almighty, "You should take away sin from me", "the Almighty should make me that I should be a tzaddik". How can a person ask that the Almighty should make him into a tzaddik?

Very good, it's very interesting. There are various questions. The Rambam brings many pesukim. But, one type of question is this that one finds explicit pesukim that say that the Almighty made people bad. He begins with that, because that hurts people more, it's more painful for people to learn. But I think the second part is even more. How many tefillos in Tehillim, "refa'eini Hashem ve'erapei", yes.

### Questions from Chazon Ish and Shem MiShmuel

The Chazon Ish asks the question in his "Emuna U'Bitachon". The Chazon Ish says, how can it be that a person should be mispallel to become better? And even more the Shem MiShmuel asks, how can a person be mispallel that a second person should do teshuva? At least for oneself, one can say that it's part of the bechira. He does teshuva, and he mixes himself, he says that it must be that also his part with teshuva, how often does one see that one is mispallel for another's teshuva? Doesn't see. How nu hanachal veyatztzunu einu vekalnu yoda shemichel. Ah, people are mispallel for their children. One is mispallel for one's children, one is mispallel for children, it's not a strange thing. One is mispallel to remain lower in the oved and risach.

### Tefilla for Teshuva and the Boundaries of Free Will

**The Question: How Can One Be Mispallel for Another's Teshuva?**

**Speaker 1:**

And even more is difficult for him, how can a person be mispallel for a second person to do teshuva? At least for oneself, one can say this is part of the bechira, he does teshuva. But he says that it must be on the part of teshuva. How can a person be mispallel for another's teshuva? Doesn't see.

**Speaker 2:**

"Vihi noam Hashem Elokeinu aleinu uma'aseh yadeinu konena aleinu", people are mispallel for children. Aye, one is mispallel for one's children, one is mispallel for children that they shouldn't do any aveira. "Vesen belibeinu le'ovdecha be'emes", this is literally a daily thing. "Hashiveinu Avinu leSorasecha vekarveinu Malkeinu la'avodatecha".

**The Rambam's Answer: Tefilla for Derech Ha'emes****Speaker 1:****Prophecies and Decrees — Does Prophecy Contradict Free Will?****Halacha 5 — The Question of Prophecies on Free Will**

However, the Rambam did find this question difficult, and the Rambam gives a different answer from the Chazon Ish's answer. The Rambam said, what does the Rambam say? **"Regarding this matter, the prophets and the righteous asked Hashem in their prayers"**. Ah, the Rambam acknowledges the problem. Dovid HaMelech, granted, someone prays against the yetzer hara, the yetzer hara pushes itself on you. But it says "many prayers among the prophets," Dovid HaMelech said, and the prophets are righteous. They ask from the Almighty **"to help them on the path of truth"**, to help them so they should be able to go on the path of truth. **"As Dovid said, 'Teach me, Hashem, Your way'"**. Show me Your way.

**Explanation of the Verse "Teach Me, Hashem, Your Way"****Speaker 1:**

**"That is to say"**, ah, he gives an interpretation in the Rambam, what is the interpretation in the Rambam. Not the simple meaning, actually the language itself is not a contradiction at all, "Teach me, Hashem, Your way" doesn't say that he shouldn't have the yetzer hara. But "Teach me, Hashem, Your way" means "the path of truth," that's a very broad thing. "Teach me, Hashem, Your way, I will walk in Your truth." Perhaps more the second one. Make the way that I should be one who "walks in Your truth." Hey, I need to myself be one who "walks in Your truth." What does it mean show me the way? You know yourself, you're a person, he's not talking about trials, what do you want from the Almighty? Also regarding beliefs, also regarding understanding things.

I mean the word "Your way" is very good, because he taught that the whole concept of "Your way" means the revelation in character traits, the good path, the middle path, and so on. **"That is to say"**, he says, **"Let my sins not prevent me from the path of truth"**. He asks the Almighty, my sins should not prevent me from the path of truth. Just as I said until now regarding sin, or as regarding Pharaoh. Dovid HaMelech asks, Creator, help me that **"my sins should not prevent me from the path of truth, so that from it I will know Your way and unify Your Name"**. Because from the path of truth I will know Your way and unify Your Name.

This is perhaps the approach of "through," what is the truth, not just the path.

**Prayer Is on the External — Not on Choice Itself****Speaker 1:**

So, one must understand that this is the point, there is already a situation when there is already a matter of... that there is already outside the person a certain, already not in his control, it's not just, here one must say that just as I learned that the approach doesn't fit some modern deed, extreme punishment, open punishment, can be a price, a normal order, certainly this must be. Right. But this is needed in order that I should acquire better habits so that my sins... That is, I have already changed, most people have already had certain... as the Rambam says in Deios, most people have already had certain bad character traits, it shouldn't be a prevention that one should think again a way out. But no, again the opposite, if it's an actual punishment it fits better, if it's a habit it's also interesting, because the habit itself is something that is with knowledge and will, how does prayer come in here?

**Speaker 2:**

True, but he says, at some point the habit is no longer... the habit is already a matter of nature, it has already become your nature, habit becomes nature. So, and here the Rambam says something interesting, that it can be so, it can be that there is, what does it mean that the Almighty will help with prayer? Just to ask simply, how does prayer work? I don't know. However prayer works, it certainly doesn't work on what a person must do himself. Right. There it is that the prayer is on what is already an external thing, already an act of Hashem. What is an act of Hashem? That this is a person. The Almighty can make, here he says something before the Almighty, the Almighty can make that a person sometimes so he says he had a psycho... experience that helped him. Right, right. The external things that happen to a person. Even internally, he receives a psycho...

**Explanation of the Verse "And a Generous Spirit Will Support Me"****Speaker 1:**

But the language here is very beautiful, because Dovid asks "Teach me, Hashem, Your way, I will walk in Your truth," which both mean seeing the truth of Hashem, seeing the Almighty, he says, sin should not hold me back from doing, from going on the path, because from there, if one is a long time on the path, then one knows the way of Hashem. But the point is, that it shouldn't enter into the slippery slope of sins which brings habit which brings that one should no longer be able to turn back. Right.

"And we are concerned lest..." Another verse that Dovid says very similarly, **"And a generous spirit will support me"**. A good spirit, a spirit of generosity should support me.

**Speaker 2:**

Shalom he... You meant that the spirit means the Almighty's spirit.

**Speaker 1:**

No, the Rambam interprets it means another... **"That is to say, let my spirit rest to do Your will"**.

And there is a way that even if my spirit wants to do good, but there is a thing that I am already accustomed to sin, I am already in such a state "and how shall I do teshuva when I am

accustomed to this sin, and the sin prevents me from teshuva," **"if the authority were in my hand I would force myself and return and stand on the path of truth"**. So, in other words, it doesn't mean, it doesn't mean what they meant who said that the prayers mean that a person should nullify the authority from the hand of the Holy One Blessed Be He, no, the opposite. The prayers are that a person should have more authority. Because what makes a person become stuck and he no longer has any authority, he is already stuck in his transgressions? Dovid says, "support me," let my spirit specifically yes have authority.

**Innovation: Prayer Means Returning Choice — Not Taking It Away**

**Speaker 2:**

So, as much as one prays for one's good, one doesn't mean to pray that the Almighty should take away the choice, one prays that the Almighty should return the choice. Very good. Leave the choice or return the choice, yes. Sorry, the authority.

**"Good and Upright Is Hashem, Therefore He Instructs Sinners in the Way"**

**Speaker 1:**

The Rambam says further, **"And in this manner all verses similar to these"**. The Rambam says further, **"And what is this that Dovid said"**, he brings another verse which is a bit more difficult, because there he speaks to others, about other people. Dovid HaMelech says thus, **"Good and upright is Hashem, therefore He instructs sinners in the way"**, He instructs sinners in the way, **"He guides the humble in justice and teaches the humble His way"**. Because the Almighty is good, He shows sinners the right way, and He guides the humble with the right justice, and He teaches the humble the way of Hashem. So what is the simple meaning? A person should himself choose the good way, not through something "He guides" that the Almighty should instruct. This is perhaps a greater question, because here it says that the Almighty leads people, and the Almighty doesn't lead people.

**Two Ways of "He Instructs Sinners in the Way"**

**Speaker 1:**

He says, **"The intention is not that they cannot choose evil"**, it doesn't mean to say that a person should not be able to choose evil, that the Almighty says "He instructs sinners in the way" that they should not be able to choose evil. No. Rather they receive an "outside" push, they receive an "outside" help. **"That He sends them prophets"**, the Almighty sends prophets who are **"informing them of the ways of Hashem and returning them in teshuva"**. This is what he says here, that "good and upright is Hashem," and consequently He gave a power to prophets to be able to guide other Jews. **"And furthermore, He gave them the power to learn and understand"**, besides that He gave a person prophets, He gave a person a power to himself return in teshuva.

Through learning and understanding, **"This measure is in every person, as long as he is drawn to the ways of wisdom and righteousness"**, that as long as he is drawn, as long as he still has a desire and an attraction to the ways of wisdom and righteousness, to learn the right ways, **"then he loves them and pursues them"**, he loves it and runs after it. So this he says, the goodness and uprightness of the Almighty is that He has these two ways of informing His

statutes and ways, either through prophets, or through the nature of the ways of wisdom and righteousness, that it leads people to do more righteousness and to desire more righteousness.

**"One Who Comes to Purify Himself Is Helped"**

**Speaker 1:**

He says, **"And this is what the Sages said"**, and this is what the Sages say, **"One who comes to purify himself"**, that a person comes himself to purify, very nice, to purify, to purify himself, **"is helped"**. Not that the one who helps will purify him, but one who comes to purify, a person wants to purify himself, this he brings as a proof, is helped, **"that is to say, he will find himself helped in the matter"**. This doesn't mean that the Almighty will help you, what it means is that the nature is that it will be found with help, either through the prophets, or through the ways of wisdom and righteousness, that when a person seeks to purify himself, he will find the powers, he will find the circumstances, the opportunities, to be helped with his way of purifying himself. Like the Zohar, the Rambam, not the Rambam, the Midrash HaNe'elam says, one who comes to purify himself is helped, who is the language of the Rambam "is helped"? Either his own soul, or souls of other righteous people. It's more or less the Rambam, the Rambam says prophets.

**Discussion: Why Doesn't the Rambam Say There Is a Parallel "Reward" by Good?**

**Speaker 2:**

So, until here we have answered all the places where it says that the Almighty forces a person to be bad or to be good.

Now one can ask just as we spoke at the beginning of the chapter a bit.

But I want to understand something, the Rambam could have gone to this a bit differently and said thus, just as there is a punishment that after one does a lot for a long time sin, one can no longer pull back and do good, so there is such a kind of reward that when one does for a long time good, one can no longer pull back and one remains doing good. But the Rambam doesn't say it, because presumably the Rambam held that there are yes stories of Yochanan Kohen Gadol, it happens that someone was a tzaddik for many years and afterwards, perhaps the Rambam held that it's not so the case, it's only yes a matter of...

**Speaker 1:**

It's a good question that you ask, but I think that the answer must lie in this, I need to think how to say, the answer must lie in what is the same structure, in other words, in what I say that it's not simple that the Almighty gives punishment, the Almighty can give a reward, because one must understand that good means authority, when a person does a thing that is good and it's not with knowledge and in form, it's worth nothing, that one said that the Almighty should serve Himself, so said Reb Nachman once, it doesn't go that way. It's the opposite, it can only be that there should be preventions, a person should lose the authority, that can be, but to receive losing the authority for good doesn't make any sense.

**Speaker 2:**

But true, what you say, the Almighty should not take the authority, that's true, but it's enslaved from itself, no? And the truth is that by evil it's also similar, because they said according to what I said that he is still guilty for evil, but there

they say that he has lost his authority, because a person truly doesn't want to do bad, I don't know why, I mean that this is the reason, because in other words, the question that you asked, why doesn't one say on the side of good that sometimes a person is so good that the Almighty forces him? Because forcing good is not good, forcing bad is still bad, he makes that he should continue to desire them and pursue them.

**Speaker 1:**

Because the point is, even the good inclination, always takes away the prevention from... There is a statement of the Sages that he continues to do good without desiring them and pursuing them, he finds himself in Gan Eden, he can't get out of it. By good it's even better that he has nothing desiring them and pursuing them.

**Speaker 2:**

So one says, I don't know if it's really a distinction, because the sinner also feels the thing that he has a desire, but he says he can't get out, then there is really no way out, it's a disease, it becomes a disease, the teshuva is called from him.

**Speaker 1:**

But the whole time you bring in the topic of addiction, I think that the Rambam doesn't speak of any addiction. I understand the addiction, but the Rambam I think yes that he wants it, he means that he wants it, he knows but... Let's ask thus, Pharaoh himself, did he think that he can't do teshuva? No, what did he think? That he can do teshuva, but he doesn't want to, right? But this the Torah says, he wanted to, but why didn't he want to? Because he couldn't.

**Speaker 2:**

But I think that the distinction is how one speaks about this, by good one says that it's the will of the person, that is truly what a person wants. By evil one says that he is mistaken, but truly it's a mitzvah brings a mitzvah and a sin brings a sin.

**Beginning of the Last Question: Prophecies About Future Wickedness**

**Speaker 1:**

Okay, now we're going to finish with the last question, which is apparently a stronger question, that there is sometimes in the Torah that says prophecies from a long time in advance, that such and such or these and these wickednesses the Egyptians are going to do, or the Jews.

**Prophecies and Decrees — Does Prophecy Contradict Free Will?**

**Halacha 5 — Question of Prophecies on Free Will**

**The Second Question: Prophecies That Say People Will Sin**

**Speaker 1:**

No, he didn't think that he can't do teshuva, but he doesn't want to. The Torah says that he doesn't want to. Why doesn't he want to? Because he can't. But I think that the distinction is how one speaks about this. By good one says that it's the will of the person, because that is truly what the person wants. By evil one says that he is mistaken, but truly he was involved, he imagined that he wants, but truly he was involved with the mitzvah, he imagined that he wants.

Okay, now we're going to finish with the last question, which is apparently a stronger question. There is sometimes in the Torah that says prophecies, prophecies already a long time in advance, that in such and such years the Egyptians are going

to do such and such, or the Jews are going to do such and such.

Two questions. "**And they will enslave them and afflict them**", the Almighty says "**and they will enslave them and afflict them**". With these words He decreed upon the Egyptians to do evil. Apparently, this is the prophecy. It's very similar to the question of Hashem's knowledge, but it's more, because the Almighty said it out. In a certain sense it's similar.

He says further, and so it says in another verse, also a prophecy, which the Almighty says to Moshe Rabbeinu, "**And this people will rise up**", behold, the Jews are going to enter into Eretz Yisrael, "**and this people will rise up and go astray after the gods of the foreigners of the land**", the Jews are going to go after idolatry. "**Behold, He decreed upon Israel to worship idolatry**". And if so the question continues, "**and why should they be punished?**" Why does He punish them? The whole concept of punishment is only if a person in his authority and knowledge does the transgression.

**The Rambam's Answer: "He Did Not Decree Upon a Specific Known Person"**

The Rambam says thus. The Rambam answers, "**Because He did not decree upon a specific known person that he should be the one who goes astray**". He begins with the second thing. This is if not for Hashem's knowledge. He said that the Jews are going to go after idolatry, He didn't say that every specific Jew is going to do idolatry, or any specific Jew. But what then did He say? That there will be idolatry. "**And each and every one of those who went astray who worshiped idolatry, if he had not wanted to worship he would not have worshiped**".

**The Rambam's Innovation: "The Creator Only Informed the Custom of the World"**

Let's read the answer that the Rambam says, because the Raavad is going to ask a question, but I think that the Rambam says something deeper that the Raavad didn't grasp that he says. The Rambam says thus, first he says thus, the Almighty never said that He was decreeing, forcing anyone to do idolatry. Every single one who did idolatry decided himself. Upon what does the Almighty say yes? "**The Creator only informed the custom of the world**". That is, the verse tells us essentially no innovation. If not for the verse it would also be so. It's a very deep Rambam. The Rambam says, "promise and decree" doesn't say a thing that will happen, and if not when the Almighty made the prophecy, the promise to Avraham, it wouldn't have happened. The verse says "the custom of the world." Why does the verse say "the custom of the world"? Because one learns to take something after something to understand, it makes an impression on the future. So the verse told the natural way.

**The Rambam's Parable: "This People Will Have Among Them Righteous and Wicked"**

"**To what is this comparable?**" he says, "**To what is this comparable? To one who says 'This people will have among them righteous and wicked'**". Ah, I can tell you now, the Rambam says, I can tell you now, "this people," that there will be, in every nation there will be wicked people. The question is, there is no free will? No, I say that this is the custom of the world, there is no other thing. There is a proof from this also, he says however, "**The wicked person should not say that it was already decreed upon him**".

**that he should be wicked, for so the Holy One Blessed Be He informed Moshe that there would be wicked people in Israel".**

Stop, I think you didn't count it correctly, I think we need to make here another... let's say like this, yes? That is, a person cannot say, the Almighty already told Moshe, there will be wicked people. You say, yes, if the Almighty hadn't said it there would also have been wicked people. The point is not that you're going to be wicked. The Almighty told Moshe the fact that usually, or always, in a nation there are wicked people.

**Proof from "Ki lo yechdal evyon mikerev ha'aretz"**

**"As it says,"** similarly, he brings a proof from another verse. How do I see in a verse that in the world there are rich people, wealthy people, and poor people? **"Ki lo yechdal evyon mikerev ha'aretz"**. So no person is going to say that it was decreed upon me to be poor because there's a verse that there are poor people.

The verse says that when a nation enters Eretz Yisrael where there is so much avodah zarah (idolatry), won't people be drawn to avodah zarah? Or the verse says that this is how the teva ha'olam (nature of the world) works, the tahlichei chukei bnei adam (processes of human laws), that when a minority comes into a large empire, they will be persecuted.

**Digression: Parable of the Prison Inmate**

I once forgot that a Jew said in the first years after the war, a Jew is sitting in prison somewhere in Eretz Yisrael, and he says like this, "Yankel, Moshe, Groynim, and Berel made a state. He's going to be head of government, he's going to be minister of religion, he's going to be minister of treasury, and I'm going to be the prison inmate." But it was, because among a people there are the leaders and the weaker ones. But you had the choice, you had the permission to be the prison inmate.

**Discussion: What is Free Choice if There are Statistics?**

What is a person's free choice? But one can ask, there are positions for everyone. One may say that there will always be tzaddikim (righteous people) and beinonim (intermediate people) and resha'im (wicked people), and indeed here everyone has free choice. What, let's be real, the choice is that you should be from the... which job you should take, which bench you should sit on. Eh, what will be if everyone will choose to be good? I don't know, that's not the question. The Torah says that there is a ben sorer u'moreh (rebellious son). The choice is whether you should be the chacham (wise son) or you should be the tam (simple son).

I'm going to ask you a question. What does the Rambam answer to this question? And what does the Rambam say about someone being poor? I don't know, the reality is that there are statistics. It says that there will always be tzaddikim and beinonim and resha'im. What does the Rambam say that everyone has free choice? I assumed that the Rambam would say that the world was truly, and the Creator said that it will be so. Okay. Let's say that everyone will do teshuvah (repentance), and I assumed that everyone should do teshuvah. But, it won't go that way either.

**The Rambam's Answer Regarding Egypt**

No, says the Rambam further, **"And so the Egyptians, as long as they ruled over Israel, each and every one of those Egyptians, if he wanted not to harm Israel, the choice was in his hand."** The Egyptians are Egyptians. All

of them persecuted and oppressed the Jews. **"If he didn't want to, he didn't harm them, the choice was in his hand."** Each Egyptian himself could have chosen that he won't oppress the Jews. **"For He did not decree upon a specific person, but rather informed that in the end his descendants would be enslaved in a land not theirs."** He informed that in the end the descendants of the Jews would be enslaved in a land not theirs. He didn't say it would be in Egypt. Even Pharaoh could have been a different one. Pharaoh decided himself to be the wicked one. The Creator said the truth, the Creator said that it will happen, and it indeed happens that way.

**Digression: Choice Within a Structure — Parable of Terror Organizations**

It's interesting, I think about this many times, and I thought that in every terror organization, in Hezbollah, there are also kindergartens and nursery teachers. It could be that the child of the great arch-terrorist, in the end he runs the playgrounds of the organization. It's true there isn't for you to be within the structure, but within the structure there were Egyptians who were wicked, and there were Egyptians who did other things, who ran the sewer system. There is a choice within the system.

And the Rambam doesn't even mean that. I think the Rambam means even all of them, even all of Egypt, even Pharaoh, each one himself decided. That's what the Creator said, that's hashgachah pratis (Divine providence). He said that the Creator is so.

**Discussion: But the Almighty Knows Which Specific Egyptian**

And this is the piece, and in honor of the occasion, because this is the Rambam. He means to say that even though one asks but the Almighty did indeed know which one it will be, did He say it about him. Perhaps he means the language as he said the general thing that the Jews will be slaves, or the general thing that the Jews will serve avodah zarah? Let's see. Let's think. Let's see.

**Halacha 5 — Conclusion: "She'ein koach ba'adam leidah heichach yada HaKadosh Baruch Hu"**

**The Rambam's Final Answer**

**"For there is no power in man to know how the Holy One, Blessed be He, knows."** A person has no power in man, as long as he is composed of body and soul, he has no power, of matter and spirit, yes, body and soul. As long as a person is bound in humanity, in humanness, he doesn't have the power to understand the knowledge of the Holy One, Blessed be He, what is the knowledge of the Holy One, Blessed be He. Therefore he doesn't know **"how the Holy One, Blessed be He, knows things that are destined to be."**

**Explanation: The Almighty's Knowledge is Not "Additional" to Reality**

I would have thought that the piece means like this. That is, first of all, one can say like this, it remains a question but the Almighty does indeed know which Egyptian. But this cannot press the previous question. I would have thought that a person would think that the Almighty's knowledge is much greater than that. Does it mean that the Almighty only knows that among the Egyptians, the Almighty knows indeed every Egyptian. The Almighty's knowledge is much greater. He says, that this is when a person thinks that the Almighty's knowledge is a million times greater than his knowledge, that's how I would have thought. The Almighty knows the Egyptians,

and He also knows which Egyptian. But you don't know what the Almighty's knowledge is. The Almighty's knowledge is so great that you...

In other words, interestingly, can he say the answer that there will be bad people, and He will reward them. In other words, it's not enough, the Almighty Himself doesn't know more. In other words, even to Him the Almighty is not comprehensible more. Okay, perhaps he means something else.

The knowledge of the Holy One, Blessed be He, one must understand, the Almighty knows things exactly as they are. The Almighty's knowledge is not additional to what things are. By us, knowledge is outside of what is additional to him, is also additional to reality. There is knowledge about reality. But the Almighty is His knowledge and His reality and His being, Hu yodei'a v'Hu ha'eid v'Hu ha'dayan (He knows and He is the witness and He is the judge). So, the Almighty knows exactly how things are. And that He tells us that there will be wicked people, that is indeed how the world is, that there will be wicked people. Which ones? That is no longer dependent on

His will, but man will decide which one it will be. And this is not at all a contradiction with the fact that the Almighty knows everything. Hey, you don't understand it? So clearly, it's thought through what the knowledge of Hashem means. But this is an answer when you want to understand this. It's not thought through, but there is no power in man. One must wait until one will be a soul. When one will be a soul, one will understand it better. One can understand, it's not so difficult. It's difficult, but one can.

If someone wants to understand, Rabbi Yitzchak, one can make an investigation.

#### **Conclusion — The Ra'avad and the Rambam's Approach**

The Ra'avad on our chapter, and also in the chapter he is generally not at all happy with the Rambam's answers. In my opinion, what should I tell you, the Rambam, yes, the Rambam, you know what happens when one learns Rambam? Whoever has learned Rambam, the Rambam speaks to the main difficulty. But according to how we have learned it very well, the Rambam has a very clear approach in this.