

# THE DUTIES OF THE HEART, GATE 7:5 - PART 1

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

There are four major components to teshuva, as we'd said, and each one encompasses a slew of unique detailed thoughts, realizations, and frankhearted reactions. As we mentioned last time, the four include regretting your sin, stopping it, admitting to it and asking to be forgiven for it, and taking it upon yourself never to commit it again. So let's now delve into each in more depth and lay out some of its features.

Understand that *some* of the reactions depicted here might catch us off guard and, frankly, set us off. We might consider them too extreme; life- negating at worst, or of another time and place at best; too doleful and dreary, and even self-destructive.

But realize that we too react passionately and drastically toward the things we care about most. Who among us would dare blame a parent who'd lost a child (G-d forbid) for rending his or her clothes, staring silently and morosely into the distance and weeping, calling out the child's name, and the like? Would anyone dare censure so "extreme" a reaction to a loss so terrible and undoing?

As such, if you're passionate about your relationship to G-d Almighty and want to never threaten it, then you too would react rather strongly if it were threatened by something you did; and you too would be touched to the core by the stunning realization of how wrong you'd been. So, taken in that light, these reactions aren't "radical" so much as deeply heartfelt and "understandable under the circumstances", as some would put it.

And so, you can only be said to truly regret your sin *wholeheartedly and from within* (which is inherent to the process, after all) after you begin to sense just how wrong you'd been to sin, and how much harm you'd done to yourself and to your relationship to G-d when you'd sinned.

You'd then likely become dispirited and weighed down and you'd want to acquiesce to G-d's will again as you'd done before; you'd change your ways and thus might decide to dress and dine more simply and with less elan; your demeanor would likely be more sober; you'd probably cry about and lament what you did and chide yourself for it; and you'd certainly think about the consequences of what you'd done again and again.

Not only would you then stop committing that sin right there and then (the second component), but you'd also stop committing all the other sins you're prone to. You're also likely to be cautious about things that are perfectly permissible on their own but which might lead to sins. (If you were in the habit of bragging about your accomplishments whenever you sat with your coworkers during long

breaks, for example, you might declare that you don't want to talk about work during breaks -- which is certainly innocent unto itself -- in order not to avoid bragging. In fact, it oftentimes come down to simple things like that!)

You'd want to take pains to be especially careful not to lapse into sins that you're still perfectly capable of committing and would still like to (rather than sins you're too old for by now, for example, or others that are out-of-reach), despite the real difficulties. And why? Because it would occur to you that G-d wants you to, and you'd be too embarrassed by that point to not try.

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