

If a man or woman commit any sin that people commit... then they shall confess their sin... and he shall make restitution for his guilt. (5:6,7)

The *Rambam* rules that *vidui*, confession, is a *mitzvah*, positive commandment, which is an integral component of the *teshuvah*, repentance, process. Interestingly, the *Rambam* does not list *teshuvah* as a *mitzvah* – only *vidui*. Given the crucial significance of *teshuvah*, we wonder why the *Rambam* does not include it in his *minyán ha'mitzvos*, detailed count of the 613 commandments. *Vidui* – yes. *Teshuvah* – no? It does not sound right. What makes the question more demanding is the fact that *vidui* is, in fact, part of the *teshuvah* process.

The **Nesivos Shalom** explains that *teshuvah* essentially is comprised of regretting the act of committing the sin. This applies whether the sin was committed intentionally or unintentionally. The fact is that the individual sinned, and, in order to expunge the spiritual taint created by his sinful behavior, he must repent. Without *teshuvah*, one remains distant from Hashem. He has offended the Almighty and refuses to acknowledge his infraction. Therefore, by refusing to repent, he is perpetuating his sinful behavior and maintaining his distance from Hashem. Accordingly, *teshuvah*, repentance, is part and parcel of the *mitzvah* to abstain from sin, for, by not repenting, he prolongs the sin. What is the difference between one who sins and one who perpetuates his sin? Regardless, he is offending Hashem. Thus, the *Rambam* writes that when one does *teshuvah*, he has an additional *mitzvah* of *vidui*.

We now have a new insight concerning the *mitzvah* of *teshuvah*. One who sins may think that while he did something wrong, that was then; now, it is over and done with: “One does not cry over spilled milk.” If he repents – good; if he does not repent – it is not the end of the world. After all, his mind is made up, and he will not sin again. What happened – happened. He cannot rewrite the past.

We now see that this is a faulty perspective. Every day that passes by without *teshuvah* is a continuation of the sin. He sins every moment that he does not repent. Therefore, when one finally acknowledges his sin and regrets its commission, he must not only regret the actual violation that he committed, but he must also do *teshuvah* for not coming to his senses and repenting earlier. To delay one's *teshuvah* is to perpetuate his sin. It is that simple.

The *pasuk* ends with the Torah's admonition that the sinner repay his victim. *Teshuvah* is not complete until the victim has been placated. The Torah begins with the words *ki yaasu*, “will commit,” in the plural; then *v'hisvadu es chatasam*, “then they shall confess their sin,” also in the plural; but ends with, *v'heishiv es ashamo*, “and he shall make restitution,” in the singular. What changes between the beginning of the *pasuk* and its conclusion? Did someone “drop out”?

Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, gives a practical explanation that, sadly has become quite true.

When it comes to confessing one's guilt, the offenders are prepared (after some pressure) to concede that they have made "mistakes"; the "investments" did not turn out as expected; "things" go wrong; "things" happen. Thus, the Torah writes the confession in the plural. This part is easy to extract. It is when it comes to compensation, when the thief has to reimburse the victim, that the *pasuk* changes into the singular. Sadly, the thieves do not wait in line to offer restitution. They erred; they are sorry. Now, the money is gone. Too bad. That's life.