

From Maimonides Law of Repentance
A selection from his Mishneh Torah
Teshuvah

Repentance - תשובה

3. Repentance and Yom Kippur atone only for the sins between man and God, such as the laws of forbidden foods. . . But in offenses between man and his fellow man, such as striking a neighbor, abusing or robbing him he is never forgiven until he restores to his neighbor what is owed and until the neighbor is asked for forgiveness. Even if the sinner repaid the money which was taken, the neighbor must still be pacified and asked for forgiveness.

2. Five things lock the paths of repentance:

- a. He who withdraws from the community
- b. He who argues with the words of the religious teachers
- c. He who mocks the Mitzvot
- d. He who despises his mentor
- e. He who hates being rebuked

3. For five things there is no complete repentance. They are sins between man and man but the transgressor does not know against which person he has sinned in order to make amends; or to beg forgiveness.

- a. He who curses the masses
- b. One who fences for a thief and does not know from whom the goods were stolen.
- c. One who finds a lost article and does not advertise to find the owner
- d. He who cheats the poor, orphans, and widows, since these unfortunates are anonymous and transient, having cheated them it is impossible to locate them and repay the damage.
- e. He who takes a bribe to pervert justice. He does not know how far reaching are the consequences nor what the power is of this perversion, in order to correct it. Furthermore he encourages the one who bribed him and causes him to sin.

2. Let not the repentant person think that he is far from the level of the righteous because of all the sins that are in his past. It is not so. He is desired and beloved before God as if he had never sinned in his life.

More yet, his reward is very great because he has tasted the flavor of sin, then he withdrew from it and restrained his desire.

Our sages say, "Where repentant sinners stand, the perfectly righteous cannot stand." That is to say, their level is greater than those who have not sinned, because they apply their restraint more.