7. Regret before we die

□□–□□□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□ □□□□ □□□□□ □□□□ ,□□□□ □□ □□□ □□□□□ ,(□,□□ □□□□□) ”□□□□ □□□□ □□ □□□ □□“ □□□□□ :□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□ □□□□ ,□□□□□ □□□□ □□□ □□□□□ □□□ □□□ □□□□–□□□□□ □□□ □□□□.

FINAL CONFESSION

We are seeing today the last of the Seven Levels of Teshuba (repentance) that Rabbi Isaac Abohab describes in his book Menorat haMaor: repentance before death. Let us clarify that according to our Sages, the possibility of doing Teshuba, repent, for the transgressions committed, never expires, not even in the moments before death. The ideal Teshuba, however, also includes the resolution not to repeat our mistake in the future (*azibat hahet*), which at the time of imminent death is obviously not relevant. But anyways, this Teshuba is accepted and is absolutely critical. The Sages say (see the Hebrew text mentioned above) that if an individual sincerely repents of his faults before dying, he obtains Divine forgiveness and his soul accesses the World to come (it is worth clarifying that this “forgiveness” refers to sins committed against God and the principles of His Torah, and does not refer to the sins and offenses that I committed against my peers, neighbors, friends and family, which must be resolved with those affected by my behavior before being forgiven by God). There is a special Viduy (confession) written particularly for the individual who knows that he is going to die. In that confession one articulates the transgressions he committed and repents for what he has done wrong.

REPENT WHILE YOU ARE CONSCIOUS!

Today, being able to make this confession on the deathbed is a bit more unusual than in the past. Why? Because in the past when someone got sick, had a fever or a simple infection, death was practically imminent. And the patient usually remained conscious until the end. Confession / repentance was always seen as an integral part of “preparing to die”. But nowadays that B”H we have so many methods of healing, resuscitation and prolongation of life, in many cases patients are unconscious in the terminal moments of their lives, intubated, unable to speak, or under the influence of morphine or other very strong drugs that help the patient not to feel pain but prevent from her or him the possibility of speech and

communication. Therefore, it is advisable to perform this Viduy while one is conscious. There is no need to fear that this Viduy will be a negative omen, on the contrary, many consider this Viduy as a meritorious act that might award the individual with a prolongation of his life!

KEEP YOUR CLOTHES CLEAN!

The Sages taught us that the best way to live our existence is by visualizing that each day we live may be the last. When we live aware of our mortality, we live with intensity and purpose. Identifying daily checks and balances of our lives. We should not wait until the "last day" to repent, because no one is sure when the last day of his or her life will be. The Sages of Gemara explained this idea from a verse from Kohelet 9: 8: *"Your clothes must be clean every day"*. "The clothes" metaphorically represent "our lives" and this pasuq means that we need to be always ready to face God… In other words, must repent and repair what we did wrong daily, since we do not know when we will be called before the Celestial Throne, and for this reason we must look *permanently presentable, with clean clothes*, that is, with no unforgiven faults, or unsettled conflicts in case we must suddenly appear before the Creator.

FINAL REFLECTION

As it happens to many other rabbis, I have visited in the hospital people who knew that they were dying. And there is a theme that is repeated in cases of terminal patients. At the end of their lives, people don't feel so sorry for mistakes (there are exceptions). In the last moments of life, which is when the memories of everything we lived pass through the mind, people mainly regret *what they should have done and DIDN'T DO*. Not having reconciled with a loved one. Not having spent more time with one's children or spouse. Or for having postponed ad infinitum great projects or ideas to help others. In those sacred moments – which is when one is fully aware of the irrecoverability of time – people regret having wasted too much time trying to "have more" instead of having dedicated themselves to "giving more", "helping more", "sharing more". In those moments, when one examines the last balance of his own life, no one thinks about the money left in the bank. When push comes to shove, what matters is not what we accumulate during our lives but what we have done and what we have failed

to do.