Contemporary Approaches to Teshuva Part II

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook

What is Teshuva?

Teshuva means “return”

It is the return to G-d,

The return to health,

The return to our soul,

The return to the universe,

The return to a mended planet,

The return to happiness,

The return to home.

Yaakov David Shulman

**מסכת נדרים דף לט:** (Nedarim 39b)

תניא שבעה דברים נבראו קודם שנברא העולם אלו הן: תורה ותשובה גן עדן וגיהנם כסא הכבוד ובית המקדש ושמו של משיח … תשובה דכתיב (תהלים צ:ב) בטרם הרים יולדו ותחול, ותשב אנוש עד דכא וגו'

It was taught in a baraita: Seven phenomena were created before the world was created, and they are: Torah, Repentance, the Garden of Eden, and Gehenom, the Throne of Glory, The Temple, and the name of the Messiah.

“Repentance” as it is written: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” ([Psalms 90:2](/Psalms.90.2)), and it is written immediately afterward: “You return man to contrition; and You say: Repent, children of man” ([Psalms 90:3](/Psalms.90.3)).

**מסכת יומא דף פו:( Yoma 86b)**

א"ר חמא בר חנינא גדולה תשובה שמביאה רפאות לעולם

Rabbi Ḥama bar Ḥanina said: **Great is repentance**, as it brings healing to the world

אמר רבי לוי גדולה תשובה שמגעת עד כסא הכבוד

Rabbi Levi said: **Great is repentance**, as it reaches the heavenly throne.

א"ר יונתן גדולה תשובה (שמקרבת) את הגאולה

Rabbi Yonatan said: **Great is repentance**, which hastens the Redemption

אמר ריש לקיש גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כשגגות. איני והאמר ריש לקיש גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכיות, לא קשיא כאן מאהבה כאן מיראה

Reish Lakish said: **Great is repentance**, as the penitent’s intentional sins are counted for him as unintentional transgressions. Is that so? Didn’t Reish Lakish himself say: **Great is repentance**, as one’s intentional sins are counted for him as merits. This is not difficult: Here, when one repents out of love, his sins become like merits; there, when one repents out of fear, his sins are counted as unwitting transgressions.

אמר ר' שמואל בר נחמני אמר ר' יונתן גדולה תשובה שמארכת שנותיו של אדם

Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: **Great is repentance**, which lengthens the years of a person’s life

1. **Introduction to Orot HaTeshuva:**

Teshuvah occupies the greatest portion of Torah and life; upon it all personal and communal hopes are founded...

1. **Orot haTeshuvah 5:6**

Even if a person is disposed to stumble, to flaw his righteousness and ethical conduct, this does not flaw his perfection. The essence of his perfection is in his established longing and desire to achieve perfection.

It is the nature of the human spirit to go on a straight path.

And when a person has turned aside from the path, when he has fallen into sin, if his spirit has not yet been completely corrupted, this natural sense of straightness saddens his heart and he wastes away from pain, and he moves with alacrity to return and repair that which is crooked, until he feels that his sin has been erased.

This is one of the fundamental principles upon which the contents of teshuva rest.

1. **Orot haTeshuvah 15:3**

Natural regret which burns in the heart is one of the traits of teshuvah, from the soul’s pain at its stagnation rather than ascent, and all the more so if it feels descent within itself.

1. **Orot haTeshuvah 8:4**

Wickedness, which resides in the depths of the soul when one does not desire to abandon it, destroys life’s equilibrium, the just connection between one’s soul and all that exists, the universe in its greater and lesser parts. Destruction of that harmony causes great pains, and when it penetrates to one’s spirit then it causes great suffering, in the form of trembling, anger and chutzpah of shame and hopelessness

**5 Sudden and Gradual Teshuva**

Teshuva may be divided into two types: sudden teshuva and gradual teshuva.

Sudden teshuva comes as the result of a spiritual lightening flash that enters the soul in a single moment. A person recognizes the evil and ugliness of the sin, and he is transformed into another person, and he already feels within himself a complete turnaround towards good. This teshuva comes about as a result of the appearance of an inner spiritual quality, as a result of a great spiritual influence.

And there is gradual teshuva. There has not flashed within this person a lightening flash that would cause a transformation from the depth of evil to good. But he feels that he must engage in a process of improving his ways and the paths of his life, his will and of his thoughts. And in this course of his, he proceeds, and little by little conquers the ways of straightness. He rectifies his traits, he improves his deeds, he teaches himself how to grow more and more worthy until he comes to a high level of refinement and rectification

**6 Specific Teshuva and General Teshuva**

There is a particular teshuva corresponding to a specific sin or many sins. The person places his sin before his face and he regrets it and is anguished that he was caught in the snare of sin.

And his soul climbs upward until he is freed from the enslavement to sin, and he feels within himself the holy freedom, which is so very pleasant to his weary soul.

And he grows progressively cured, and the radiances of the light of the sun of kindness, a supernal kindness, send their rays to him. And he grows increasingly content. He feels he that he is coming closer to the Source of all life, to the living G-d, Who just a short time before was so very far away from him. His yearning soul remembers with a joyful heart its inner affliction and anguish, and is filled with feelings of gratitude.

With praise and song, it raises its voice: “My soul, praise Hashem, and do not forget all of His Kindnesses – Who forgives all of your sins, Who heals all of your ailments, Who redeems your life from destruction…”

And there is another feeling of general, non-specified teshuva:

No sin or sins of the past enter his awareness, but in general he feels within himself that he is very much oppressed, that he is filled with sin, that the light of Hashem is not shining upon him. There is no willing spirit within him; he heart is sealed. His traits and the qualities of his personality do not proceed on the straight and fitting path. He is ashamed before himself. He knows that G-d is not with him, and for him, this is the greatest suffering, the most terrible lack.

He feels bitterness about his life.

From the midst of this bitter feeling of his spirit, teshuva comes like the bandage of an expert healer. The feeling of teshuva…streams into his being. “Like a person whose mother comforts him, so will I comfort you” (Isaiah 66:13). He feels this. And with every day that passes by, with the resonance of this exalted and inclusive teshuva, his feeling grows more certain, more clear, more illuminated by the light of the intellect and more clear in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Torah.

And he becomes increasingly illuminated. The face of anger disappears. A light of acceptance begins to shine. His eye are filled with a holy fire, his heart immersed in streams of delight, holiness and purity hover above him, infinite love fills all of his being. His soul is thirsting for Hashem, and like succulent delicacies sates him with this thirst.

Holy inspiration reverberates before him like a bell, and he is appraised that all of his willful sins have been wiped away – those that are known to him those that that are not known to him – that he has been re-created as a new being, with whom the entire world and all the worlds have been renewed.

And everything is singing. The joy of Hashem fills everything.

**7 The Leaping Flames of Teshuva**

The currents of teshuva – of the individual and of the community – surge forward.

They resemble waves of flames upon the body of the sun – which, in a perpetual struggle, shoot forth and give life to a profusion of worlds and innumerable creatures.

There is no ability to absorb the vast multitude of many hues of that great sun, which shines upon all of the worlds, the sun of teshuva. The individual and communal soul, which is of the world and of all worlds, like an awesome lioness roars in its pangs for complete rectification, for the ideal existence.

With the use of words, it is impossible for us to express this thought.

We engage in unifications.

We meditate upon Names

Words are revealed.

And the soul grows ever more rectified

**8 Returns to G-dliness**

Through Teshuva, everything returns to G-dliness.

Through the reality of the power of teshuva, which rules over all of the worlds, everything returns and is connected to the perfect G-dly reality.

And as a result of the ideas of Teshuva, its concepts and feelings, all thoughts ideas and concepts, desires and feelings are transformed, and return to be secured in the essence of their character in the holy Divine character.

**9 Orot haTeshuvah 14:36**

When one wishes specifically to be a fully righteous person, it is difficult for him to be a baal teshuvah. Therefore, it is appropriate for a person to place within his heart the longing to be a baal teshuvah, immersed in the idea of teshuvah and longing for its actualization. Then his teshuvah will be able to elevate him to the level of fully righteous people, and beyond.

Rav Kook (1865-1935), first Chief Rabbi of Pre-State Israel, was a Talmudic genius, a communal leader, a saintly personality, an impassioned visionary, a fighter for social injustice, a poet, and a mystic who seamlessly combined the two worlds of his parents: Chasidus and Traditional Lithuanian Talmud study. He was also a deeply original thinker, a poet of the soul and a spokesperson for a complete human spirit, universal creativity, and the unceasing natural song of all being. When asked to define his philosophy, he responded simply: “Everything is Rising!”

(Taragin, Revolutionary sefer teshuva): The world in constant state of teshuva, more than an isolated one moment. “Good” is not yet perfected. Best way to describe it is “evolution”, entire world, cosmos, environment, society, human body, politics, health, all in a state of flux surging towards improvement, this connecting and evolution is connecting to hashem the ultimate good. exists nationally, for all nations not just us.

when a person fails morally, he falls out of sync with the world energy, we’re zigging and he is zagging; world moving towards improvements, and not in sync. A person senses and feels that pain. The guilt a person has when they fail or sin, is the feeling of being Disconnected. Loneliness. Disassociated from overall existence and surging energy. (Healthier physically as well).

Teshuva is not just response to failure, but blueprint for all of existence. Teshuva elyona. Noty just improving yourself, but improving growth development. Drama of the universe, of history. When a nation develops a policy more morally correct, that is the energy and experience of “teshuva”. Humanity moving forsard, not just eleul. Teshuva kadma l’olam. World based on this principle. Just like Torah is content of the world, teshuva is the spirit or trajectory of this world, created imperfect, surging towards perfection.

Experience associated with light and darkness. Dovid is dark and sad, in his world it is light -radiant, not just elul and sin, ability to be in sync with the universe. Provides confidence and happiness, not morose and sadness.

Book is poetic, not prose, kabbalistic. Reading his work is a man exploding out of himself trying to express what’s in his soul

When Human fall off moarally, then disaccoaite thems elves fromuniversdalalignment and frequency of Hashems will. Universal alignement. Freedom of schoice, tobe used to connect to Hashem’s Will. Align with sun moon an duniverse abnd sens eof Tov.