Contemporary Approaches To Teshuva:

The Solinimer Rebbe

HaRav Sholom Noach Berezovsky

1. Talmud Yerushalmi Makkot 2:6

שאלו לחכמה חוטא מהו עונשו, אמרו להם חטאים "תרדף רעה". שאלו לנבואה חוטא מהו עונשו, אמרה להן הנפש החוטאת היא תמות. שאלו לקודשא בריך הוא חוטא מהו עונשו, אמר להן יעשו תשובה ויתכפר לו .

The prophets asked Wisdom, 'What is the punishment of the sinner? Wisdom answered, 'Evil pursue sinners' (Proverbs 13:21).

They asked Prophecy, 'What is the punishment of the sinner?' Prophecy answered, 'The soul that sins, it shall die' (Ezekiel 18:4).

They asked the Holy One, Blessed be He, 'What is the punishment of the sinner?' The Holy One Blessed be He answered, 'Let him do Teshuva and it shall be forgiven onto him.'

1. Brachot 34b

במקום שבעלי תשובה עומדים, אין צדיקים גמורים יכולים לעמוד

Rabbi Abbahu said: In the place where penitents stand, even the full-fledged righteous do not stand (Brachot 34b)

1. Introduction to The Path Of Teshuva

Teshuva is a Full and Complete Tractate, a wonderous and fundamental aspect to being a Jew. Wider than the earth and deeper than the sea, it is an intrinsic element of a Jew’s life that defines his life as a Jew. It is relevant to everyone, whether a person is a *rasha* (wicked), a *beinoni* (intermediate), or a *tzadik gamur* (completely righteous). It is similarly relevant in any and every aspect and circumstance of a person’s life, whether he is in the darkest moments of despair or the height of greatest joy or spiritual ecstasy of serving Hashem. A Jew must always live in the world of Teshuva.

This is reflected in what the Sages established in the *Shmoneh esrei*, immediately after the 4th blessing requesting *daat* (knowledge/wisdom), we ask:

השיבנו אבינו לתורך, וקרבנו מלכנו לעבודך, והחזירנו בתשובה שלמה לפניך

Bring us back, our Father, to your Torah, and bring us near, our King, to Your service, and influence us to return in perfect repentance before You

Three times a day - morning, afternoon and evening - every Jew, irrespective of his spiritual state, under every possible circumstance and situation, beseeches Hashem to be in the world of Teshuva.

1. ibid

The reason for this is as follows: Certainly if one has stumbled and sinned - and “there is no righteous person who only does good and never sins” (Kohelet 7) – Teshuva is relevant. But even in the highest levels of righteousness where one is engrossed in Torah, Mitzvot and Service of Hashem, it is impossible that there not be some *p’gam* (blemish) in his service, some element that his actions did not reach the highest levels of *shleimus* (perfection). However exalted understanding the *tzadik* achieves of Hashem Himself, and therefore refrains from evil and strives to attain good, standing before the King of Kings Whose Greatness is beyond comprehension, there by definition must be some missing element of understanding of before Whom he stands. As such, Hashem created the world of Teshuva, to complete any lacking in his service. In the same way that a *rasha* can fix or correct his sins and iniquities, a *tzadik* can utilize teshuva to bring his positive actions to an even higher level of perfection.

Teshuva is therefore the source of completion/perfection of the life of a Jew, both to fix what we’ve done wrong, and to complete that which we’ve done right. Teshuva thereby brings the world to completion, which is the purpose and goal of all of creation, as the Sages say: teshuva preceded the Creation of the World, for it is impossible for the world to achieve perfection without Teshuva.

1. Yoma 86a

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

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

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

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.

1. Rambam, Hilchot Teshuva Chap 7

גְּדוֹלָה תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁמְּקָרֶבֶת אֶת הָאָדָם לַשְּׁכִינָה, כְּלוֹמַר אִם תַּחֲזֹר בִּתְשׁוּבָה בִּי תִּדְבַּק. הַתְּשׁוּבָה מְקָרֶבֶת אֶת הָרְחוֹקִים. אֶמֶשׁ הָיָה זֶה שָׂנאוּי לִפְנֵי הַמָּקוֹם מְשֻׁקָּץ וּמְרֻחָק וְתוֹעֵבָה. וְהַיּוֹם הוּא אָהוּב וְנֶחְמָד קָרוֹב וְיָדִיד. וְכֵן אַתָּה מוֹצֵא שֶׁבְּלָשׁוֹן שֶׁהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מַרְחִיק הַחוֹטְאִים בָּהּ מְקָרֵב אֶת הַשָּׁבִים בֵּין יָחִיד בֵּין רַבִּים.

Great, indeed, is repentance for it brings man close to the Shekinah. Repentance brings near those who were far apart. Yesterday this sinner was repulsive before the presence of G-d, scorned, ostracized and abominate, but today he is beloved, desirable, close and a cherished friend. Indeed in the very language G-d employs to distance the sinners He employs to bring them close to Him, whether the individual or the many

כַּמָּה מְעֻלָּה מַעֲלַת הַתְּשׁוּבָה. אֶמֶשׁ הָיָה זֶה מֻבְדָּל מֵה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְהַיּוֹם הוּא מֻדְבָּק בַּשְּׁכִינָה

How superior is the degree of repentance! But yesterday was this sinner separated and distant from Hashem, G-d of Israel. But today he is attached with the Shekinah

1. Rambam, Hilchot Teshuva , Chap. 2

מִדַּרְכֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה לִהְיוֹת הַשָּׁב צוֹעֵק תָּמִיד לִפְנֵי הַשֵּׁם בִּבְכִי וּבְתַחֲנוּנִים וְעוֹשֶׂה צְדָקָה כְּפִי כֹּחוֹ וּמִתְרַחֵק הַרְבֵּה מִן הַדָּבָר שֶׁחָטָא בּוֹ וּמְשַׁנֶּה שְׁמוֹ כְּלוֹמַר אֲנִי אַחֵר וְאֵינִי אוֹתוֹ הָאִישׁ שֶׁעָשָׂה אוֹתָן הַמַּעֲשִׂים וּמְשַׁנֶּה מַעֲשָׂיו כֻּלָּן לְטוֹבָה וּלְדֶרֶךְ יְשָׁרָה וְגוֹלֶה מִמְּקוֹמוֹ. שֶׁגָּלוּת מְכַפֶּרֶת עָוֹן מִפְּנֵי שֶׁגּוֹרֶמֶת לוֹ לְהִכָּנַע וְלִהְיוֹת עָנָו וּשְׁפַל רוּחַ:

Among the ways of repentance are, for the penitent to continue to cry out in tearful supplication before the Name, to bestow alms according to his means, and to distance himself exceedingly from the thing wherein he sinned, to have his identity changed, as if saying: "I am now another person, and not that person who perpetrated those misdeeds", to completely change his conduct for the good and straight path, and to exile himself from his place of residence, for exile atones iniquity, because it leads him to submissiveness and to be meek and humble-spirited.

1. Rambam, Hilchot Teshuva 1:1

כָּל מִצְוֹת שֶׁבַּתּוֹרָה בֵּין עֲשֵׂה בֵּין לֹא תַּעֲשֶׂה אִם עָבַר אָדָם עַל אַחַת מֵהֶן בֵּין בְּזָדוֹן בֵּין בִּשְׁגָגָה כְּשֶׁיַּעֲשֶׂה תְּשׁוּבָה וְיָשׁוּב מֵחֶטְאוֹ חַיָּב לְהִתְוַדּוֹת לִפְנֵי הָאֵל בָּרוּךְ הוּא זֶה וִדּוּי דְּבָרִים. וִדּוּי זֶה מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה

All commandments of the Torah, whether they be mandatory or prohibitive, if a man violates any one of them, either intentionally or erroneously, when he will repent and turn away from his sinful way, he is obliged to confess before G-d, blessed is He! As it is said: "When a man or woman shall commit any sin..… Then they shall confess their sin which they have done ([Num. 5.6–7](/Numbers.5.6-7))”, which is a confession of words. This confession is a positive commandment.

Rabbi **Sholom Noach Berezovsky**, (b. Baranovitsch, August 8, 1911 – d. Israel, August 8, 2000) served as [Slonimer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slonim_%28Hasidic_dynasty%29%22%20%5Co%20%22Slonim%20%28Hasidic%20dynasty%29) [Rebbe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebbe%22%20%5Co%20%22Rebbe) from 1981 until his death. He is widely known for his teachings which he published as a series of books entitled *Nesivos Sholom*. Through his writings he was among the most influential of contemporary chasidic rebbes, among chasidim and non-chasidim alike

Born to a prominent family in Slonim, in 1933 he married a daughter of Rabbi [Avrohom Weinberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Avrohom_Weinberg&action=edit&redlink=1) of [Tverya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberias%22%20%5Co%20%22Tiberias), later to become Slonimer Rebbe (*Bircath Avrohom*).

Sholom Noach studied in the Slonimer [yeshiva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yeshiva) Toras Chessed in Baranovitsh.which combined the [Lithuanian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithuanian_Jews) Talmudic style of the Misnagdic yeshivas with the Hasidic approach.

In 1940, Rabbi Sholom Noach was appointed *rosh yeshiva* of *Achei Temimim*, the [Lubavitcher yeshiva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomchei_Temimim) in Tel Aviv. In 1941 he opened the Slonimer yeshiva in [Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem) with just five students

The Slonim [Hasidic dynasty](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasidic_dynasty) was virtually wiped out in the [Holocaust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust); the yeshiva in Jerusalem served as the focus for its revival. As part of his effort to rejuvenate Slonimer chasidus, Rabbi Sholom Noach was responsible for collecting the oral traditions ascribed to previous Slonimer rebbes (who did not commit their teachings to writing) in works such as *Divrei Shmuel* and *Toras Ovos*. He succeeded his father-in-law as Slonimer Rebbe following the latter's death in 1981, serving in that capacity for almost twenty years. He is succeeded by his son, Rabbi Shmuel.