Turning to Teshuvah:
Its Evolution as a Resource For Contemporary Rabbinic Counseling

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Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinical Program
New York, New York

February 1,2010

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Abstract

This thesis explores how the Jewish concept of *teshuvah,* evolved from the days of the sacrificial cult in ancient Israel until current times. Using primary biblical and rabbinic texts as well as a wide scope of contemporary literature on the subject of atonement, both general and specifically Jewish, it offers a psychologically infused framework well-suited for the purposes of rabbinic pastoral counseling. By using a psychological lens, this thesis looks back at developing notions of *teshuvah,* to draw forth the psychological aspect relevant for contemporary times.

The introduction describes the early historical evolution of *teshuvah*. The first chapter utilizes a contemporary psychological perspective on Maimonides' *Hilchot Teshuvah* to draw relevance for a pastoral approach to *teshuvah.* The second chapter examines the aspects of Rav Soloveitchik's work *on teshuvah* as influenced by and informed by psychology and phenomenology. The third chapter compares and contrasts the fields of psychotherapy and the framework of t*eshuvah* regarding atonement. The fourth and final chapter utilizes four biblical characters – Adam, Cain, Joseph and Judah -- as case studies embodying ascending levels of *teshuvah.* The summary chapter examines lessons drawn from examining the development of *teshuvah t*hrough a psychological prism and how this framework can be useful for rabbis in their pastoral work with congregants.

INTRODUCTION:

We live in a society in which there are few communal norms, responsibilities or obligations, and a wide tolerance for what is considered to be acceptable behavior. “Do what feels right ” is a common cliché, reflecting the ethos of our time. Yet, people continue to be plagued by a sense of discomfort that they have erred in their behavior toward others. Consequently, rabbis often find themselves sitting in their studies with congregants who have come to share their burden of dis-ease. They come looking for reassurance that they have not sinned. They come seeking absolution for things that they feel uncomfortable about in their histories. What is the role of rabbis today, when congregants come to seek their counsel? How do we decide whether we should refer them to a psychotherapist, suggest that they attend Yom Kippur services or is there some more profound wisdom that we can offer them based on our biblical, rabbinic and later textual sources? In fact what we can offer them is guidance based on the ancient process of atonement, *teshuvah.* Over the past century, t*eshuvah* has been reframed and understood through the prism of psychology, imbuing it with a contemporary relevance and making it a powerful vehicle for people to address the very concerns just mentioned.

Our pastoral role has grown perhaps in part because of the lack of structure and clear expectations for conduct in our post-modern, relativist culture and also because of

the lack of communal norms and expectations of liberal Judaism. Our congregants turn to us, seeking guidance to distinguish right from wrong. It is within our province to help them acknowledge wrongdoing, validate their capacity to make come to terms with their actions, and to empower them to do *teshuvah*. It is an enormous opportunity to help them become spiritually ambitious and to accompany them on the path to examine their past behaviors within the framework of Jewish ethics and values.

These moments of personal crisis arise in some measure because of how socially isolated many people are today. As rabbis, this is a moment for us to not only help the individual to use their remorse as a source of energy to draw them closer to God and as an inspiration toward moral ethical behavior; it is also the opportunity to engage them in the community and in the wisdom of our texts. Our congregants turn to us when they are unsettled about some aspect of their lives or of their actions. It is incumbent upon us to help connect them to do *teshuvah* and to return, to the wisdom, warmth and values of Judaism. What we have to offer is a return to closeness to God and to the community.

The function of this thesis is to explore the development of the concept of *teshuvah*, to trace its evolution from being rooted in a sacrificial cult to a psychologically infused understanding and approach to atonement, and to examine its implications for our current work with congregants. The first chapter reviews the main precepts of Maimonides, the first commentator to write a complete work on the laws of *teshuvah* entitled, "*Hilchot Teshuvah*." That chapter is followed by a review of the writings of the 20th century thinker Rav Soloveitchik, who expanded on Maimonides notion of *teshuvah* by virtue of the influence of the ideas of thinkers such as the phenomenologist Scheler and by the founder of psychoanalysis, Freud. The third chapter examines the interface

between psychology and *teshuvah*. In what ways are the two processes similar and how do they differ? The fourth chapter examines four biblical narratives. Examined through the prism of a contemporary lens of *teshuvah,* they serve to show us ascending levels of *teshuvah*. In the last chapter, I postulate how we, in our role as pastoral rabbis, grounded in the laws of *teshuvah* that are informed by a psychological perspective, can use this prism to help our congregants to grow and live Jewish lives of *shlaymut,* wholeness.

In order to understand *teshuvah*'s implications for today's world, it is important to trace the origins of the concept of *teshuvah*. Therefore what follows is a brief synopsis of the history of *teshuvah* from biblical times, when *teshuvah* was an element of the sacrificial cult. This period lasted until the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., and was followed by rabbinic emendations, found in the Mishnah and Talmud, upon which Maimonides based his work, *Hilchot Teshuvah*.

The Origins of *Teshuvah*

The first references to repentance appear in the Bible. These serve as the basis for later thinking on the subject of *teshuvah*. Maimonides' compendium of the laws of *teshuvah* is built upon the thinking of the rabbis, and their approach to the challenge of creating a replacement for Temple sacrifices, the mainstay of atonement prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. In fact, the *Tanach* contains no explicit commandment to do *teshuvah* as a reflective personal process.

Leviticus 16 is considered to be the text that serves as the basis of the observance of Yom Kippur. The original rituals of *kappara,* atonement, were designed to

remove defilement from the Israelites, as it was impurity that the people believed kept God at a distance. Aaron, the High Priest, is instructed to purify the Temple by two methods. Two goats were brought to the priests. Lots were drawn. One goat was sacrificed as the, *korban chatat.*[1] Its blood was splattered in a prescribed fashion to remove impurities. The other was chosen as a scapegoat who would carry away all the sins of the community. The High Priest would put his hands on the head of a goat, and "confess over it all the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites, whatever their sins, putting them on the head of the goat and it shall be sent off to the wilderness… " (Lev 16:21)[2].

Sin at this time was defined as a weight, a burden that was created when one would sin. Thus sin had a sense of "thingness,"[3] meaning that sin had actual material properties. Thus, the weight of the sins of the people was placed onto the goat to carry the sins away from the community into the desert. When the goat carries the sins into the desert, it "is in reality returning evil to its source, the netherworld."[4] The desert at that time was seen as a place of sinfulness. Thus, the goat, the embodiment of sinfulness, would carry the sins back to their place of origin, hopefully never to return.[5] The goat that was sent into the desert atoned for all of Israel's sins including the intentional and the

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[1] "A purgation offering (*chatat*) is required for inadvertent commission of an act forbidden by the Torah that if deliberate would have been punished by being cut off from kin." W. Gunther Plautt Ed. *The Torah :A Modern Commentary*, (NY:URJ Press, 2005)680.
[2] All biblical citations are taken from *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh (*Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999)
[3] Gary A. Anderson, Sin*: A History,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) 6
[4] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus, 1-16,* (New York: Doubleday, 1991) 1072.
[5] Baruch Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary,: Leviticus,* (New York: Jewish Publication Society,1989) 251, 252.

unintentional, the light ones and the severe. Thus Yom Kippur was first depicted in the Bible as a day of ridding the community of both sin and ritual impurity. Although the Israelites were instructed to observe Yom Kippur as a " Day of Atonement, " a "Sabbath of solemn rest" and "self denial." (Leviticus 23:27-32), the later concept of doing *cheshbon nefesh*, a personal accounting of one's behavior, was not yet present.

In biblical times, the *chatat* sacrifice atoned only for major inadvertent sins (those worthy of *karet*, being cut off) between man and God, with the priests acting as intermediaries. In contradistinction, the failure to observe positive commandments was considered light sins, not worthy of *karet.* It is noteworthy that the Bible held people accountable for unintentional sins, reminding us that Judaism regards not only intentions, but also actions, as critical.[6]

The concept of *shuv*, returning to God, is absent from the Torah. The word first appears in the Tanach as used by the prophets to exhort the Israelites to return, *shuv*, to God. Wayward humans could return to God by means of repairing their relationship with God. The word atonement, at-one, connotes the manner in which a person, separated from God by sinful behavior, can return to be at-one with God. [7]

> Your iniquities have been a barrier between you and your God,
> Your sins have turned Him turn His face away
> And refuse to hear you. (Isaiah 59:2,3)
>
> Return O Israel, to the Lord your God,
> For you have fallen because of your sin.
> Take with you, and return to the Lord.

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[6] Sacks, Jonathan, *Covenant and Conversation: Thoughts on the Weekly Parsha from the Chief Rabbi,* Vayikra "March 28, 2009.
[7] 7 W. Gunther Plaut ed. 781

Say to Him: Forgive all guilt, and accept what is good;
Instead of bulls we will pay (The offering of) our lips. (Hosea 14:2,3)

In seeking to repair the relationship with God, one could invoke one's forefathers and ask God to grant forgiveness for the sake of *zechut avot* , the merit of our forefathers, and because of Israel's special covenanted relationship to God. The writings of the prophets are filled with loathing of the pomp and circumstance of sacrifice when accompanied by sinful behavior.

I loathe, I spurn your festivals,
I am not appeased by your solemn assemblies.
If you offer Me burnt offerings –or your meal offerings,
-I will not accept them; I will pay no heed to your gifts of fatlings.
Spare Me the sound of your hymns,
And let me not hear the music of your lutes.
But let justice well up like water,
Righteousness like an unfailing stream. (Amos 5:21-25)

For I desire goodness, not sacrifice.
Obedience to God, rather than burnt offerings.(Hos. 6:6)

The prophetic message preferenced social justice as well, as ethical and moral behavior, over sacrificial offerings and songs of praise. Sacrificial atonement was not acceptable to the prophets when it was not accompanied by upright behavior. Likewise acts of penitence such as fasting or donning sackcloth were also not acceptable when not accompanied by true regret and remorse for the sin. (Isaiah 1:10)

It was during the Second Temple period that the concept of sin changed from a metaphor of sin as a weight that needed to be carried away, to a debt that

needed to be repaid. The language shifts to a language commensurate with the language of commerce. Debts and credits become the equivalent to sins and merits. The object of *teshuvah* is to balance the ledger.[8] Gary A. Anderson, theology professor at Notre Dame, in his book, "Sin: A History" ascribes this shift to the infusion of Persian culture via the Aramaic into Jewish thought. This shift was thought to occur during the era of Persian dominance over the region, which lasted from 583 BCE to 333 BCE.

This period marked a transition for the Israelites from self rule to dominance by first the Persians and later the Romans. The exile to Babylonia was seen as punishment for national sinning, the punishment for which was seventy years of exile and slavery. The Persian concept of debt-slavery to pay off the debt of sin is infused in the prophetic message. "Comfort, comfort, my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and declare to her that her term of service is over, that her iniquity is expiated; For she has received at the hand of the Lord double for all her sins." (Isaiah 40:1-2)

With the end of the sacrificial ritual of atonement in the Temple, after its destruction in 70 C.E., the rabbis of the Talmudic period and the Geonim delineated alternate practices as a substitute. *Teshuvah* became the only path for atonement for all sins. Whereas the sacrificial system had been highly mechanistic: man sinned, the priests sacrificed and God accepted man's sacrifice, the system of *teshuvah* devised by the rabbis and later compiled by Maimonides

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[8] Anderson 96

was, based on a more personal relationship between God and the atoner. *Teshuvah* from Talmudic times could be defined as a return to God from "a situation of estrangement"[9] caused by sin. Repentance was an intentional act, which could lead to full forgiveness.

The process of *teshuvah* in the Talmud suggests that God is a God of both judgment and compassion. God's compassionate nature is attested to in the *Tosefta,* which states that God's compassion is five hundred times greater than His anger. (*Tosefta Sotah* 4:1)(A1)[10] Man acts sinfully, or meritoriously by virtue of keeping or breaking the mitzvoth, God judges and gives man has multiple opportunities to do *teshuvah*. It is possible to repent until the very moment of death. The essential message is that God wants to forgive man's sins. The statement, "He who sins and regrets his act is at once forgiven," (*Berachot 12:b*) is core to the Talmud's attitude toward atonement.

The Babylonian Talmud divided the transgressions for which *teshuvah* was required, into four levels of severity:

> Matthia b. Heresh asked R. Eleazar b. Azariah in Rome: Have you heard about the four kinds of sins, concerning which R. Ishmael has lectured? He answered: They are three, and with each is repentance connected - If one transgressed a positive commandment and repented, then he is forgiven, before he has moved from his place; as it is said: "Return, O backsliding children." (Yirmiyahu 3:14). If he has transgressed a prohibition and repented, then repentance suspends [the punishment] and the Day of Atonement procures atonement, as it is said: "For on

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[9] Jacob, Neusner "Repentance in Judaism," Amitai Etzioni & David E. Carney, *Repentance: A Comparative Perspective,* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc.,1997) 21.

[10] All Hebrew and Aramaic texts which are cited in Appendix #1 will be indicated by (A-) next to where it is referenced the body of the thesis.

> this day shall atonement be made for you ... from all your sins." (Vayikra 16:30) If he has committed [a sin to be punished with] extirpation or death through the Bet Din, and repented, then repentance and the Day of Atonement suspend [the punishment thereon], and suffering finishes the atonement, as it is said: "Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with strokes" (Tehillim 89:43). But if he has been guilty of the profanation of the Name, then penitence has no power to suspend punishment, nor the Day of Atonement to procure atonement, nor suffering to finish it, but all of them together suspend the punishment and only death finishes it, as it is said: "And the Lord of hosts revealed Himself in my ears; surely this iniquity shall not be expiated by you till ye die." (Yoma 86a)(A2)

As we have seen in the introductory chapter, the original sacrificial, priestly, biblical conception of Yom Kippur, was a far more concrete view of atonement in which the High Priest, in acts of expiation represented the community as one, *Klal Yisrael*. In biblical times, sins actually had concrete properties that made it possible to send them away to the desert. Atonement was about making the right sacrifice to atone for sin. *Klal Yisrael* assumed a passive role. Even though the people were instructed to keep the day as a Shabbat day and as a day to afflict oneself (generally understood to be a fast day), there is no mention of *cheshbon nefesh* and personal atonement.

The prophets expanded the notion by making the link to the moral imperative of social justice, of actions of human beings toward others. The degree to which the Israelites cared for the weak in their midst, affected God’s closeness or distance from them as a people.

The rabbis altered and elaborated the concept of *teshuvah* radically by elaborating and elevating it as a core Jewish concept. They articulated clearly for the first time the requirements for inter- personal as well as individual and group

(*klal Yisrael) teshuvah* between human beings and God. "But in all statements on the matter, (of *teshuvah*) the single trait proves ubiquitous: repentance defines a stage in the relationship of man and God, inclusive of repentance to one's fellow for sins against him or her."[11]

CHAPTER 1: MAIMONIDES CONCEPT OF TESHUVAH

Maimonides compiled and codified the laws of atonement in his legal writing, the *Mishneh Torah*, in *Hilchot Teshuvah*. It was the first attempt to summarize and classify all the laws of *teshuvah*, delineating a range of sins that individuals can potentially commit and the concomitant paths of atonement. The book follows the rabbinic model of interweaving the *halacha* with *aggadah,* yielding a philosophically rich meta-*halachic* rationale for the laws of atonement.

To analyze *Hilchot Teshuvah*, it is important to understand it within the context of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, the larger work within which it is found. In writing the *Mishneh Torah*, he produced an original, and virtually unprecedented, systematic code of Jewish law.

As a consequence of the Jews' geographic dispersion in Maimonides' time, the practice of *teshuvah* undoubtedly varied from community to community. Concerned about the lack of consistency, Maimonides attempted to compile the

[11] Jacob Neusner,62.

various rabbinic halachot, thereby creating the first unified and systematic approach to post-Temple atonement.

He forged a direct link from the sacrificial system of atonement of the Temple to the rabbinic practices. "At present, when the Temple does not exist and there is no altar for atonement, there remains nothing else aside from *teshuvah."* (*Hilchot Teshuvah* 1:3) [12] (A3) Maimonides' thinking was a distillation of Palestinian and Babylonian Talmudic texts on *teshuvah*, especially Tractate *Yoma.*

Imbedded in Maimonides' concept of *teshuvah* is the assumption that God and the Israelites stand in covenantal relationship to each other. The basis of the relationship is the Sinaitic promise of the Israelites to adhere to the *mitzvoth* of the *Torah.* God in turn, promises to protect the people Israel and return them to the Promised Land. While sin creates distance between them and God, they can grow closer to God by way of *teshuvah.* God takes back the people Israel despite repeated breaches of the Covenantal promise to worship only God.

The implicit promise that God is forgiving and compassionate to God's people is what made it possible for Moses to repeatedly plead to God to forgive the Israelites.[13] Viewed this way, sin creates a breach in the covenantal relationship with God.

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[12]All English language quotes from Maimonides' Hilchot *Teshuvah* are taken from Rabbi Eliyahu Touger (translator)*Maimonides:Mishneh Torah: Hilchot Teshuvah, The Laws of Repentance.* (Jerusalem: Moznayim Publishing Corporation1990) and will be cited as H.T.

[13] David Rosen,*The Concept of Forgiveness in Judaism,* rabbidavidrosen.net/articles.htm

Maimonides states this most clearly in *Hilchot Tehsuvah* 7:7 (A4) "Previously the transgressor was separate from God, the Lord of Israel, as Isaiah 59:2 states 'your iniquities have been a barrier between you and your God."[14] Each person should maintain closeness with God by asking His forgiveness three times daily in the *tefilla* and by observing the *mitzvoth* to be sure one "tips his balance and that of the entire world to the side of merit and brings deliverance and salvation to himself and others."(H.T 3:4)[15] (A5) *Teshuvah* is the process that helps each individual to reconcile and renew his or her covenant with God.

As sin creates distance between God and human beings, *teshuvah* becomes the means by which to restore that relationship. Inter alia, Maimonides' writing suggests an optimistic view of both God and humans. He depicts God as fair and compassionate in judgment, always making it possible for one to return to God. At the same time, having been created with free will, one has the capacity for self -reflection, atonement and self-improvement. *Teshuvah* is the process by which God and humans can repair the rift created by people's sin and restore the intimacy of their relationship.

Maimonides places high demands on one to keep the *mitzvoth;* yet, at the same time, he understands that humankind is sinful and anticipates that people will fail to meet those standards. In keeping with the Talmudic rabbis, Maimonides portrays God as desirous of a strong covenantal relationship with the Israelites and consummately compassionate, ready to forgive a person until the moment of their death. "Even if he

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[14] H.T. 168
[15] Ibid

transgressed throughout his life and repented on the day of his death and died in repentance, all his sins are forgiven." (*Hilchot Teshuvah* 2:1)[16](A6)

In chapter 2:2 of *Hilchot Teshuvah*, Maimonides describes the essential four-step process of *teshuvah* elements of *teshuvah:* (A7)

> "What constitutes *teshuvah*? That a sinner should abandon his sins and remove them from his thoughts, resolving in his heart, never to commit them again as (Isaiah 55:7) states, "May the wicked abandon his ways…" Similarly, he must regret the past as (Jeremiah 31:18_ states: After I returned I regretted." He must reach the level of where He who knows the hidden will testify concerning him that he will never return to this sin again…he must verbally confess and state these matters which he has resolved in his heart."[17]

In summary, the sinner must stop the sinful behavior; resolve to never repeat it; regret the behavior; and then verbally confess. However, there is something counterintuitive about the sequence of steps. Wouldn't it make more sense to confess verbally before resolving to never repeat the behavior of the past? Wouldn't it make more sense to put the past to rest before moving into the future? One possible interpretation of the logic of Maimonides' sequence, an admittedly psychological one, is that given how difficult it is to change human behavior, were we to confess first, we might not have the belief that we could successfully repent. Thus, the resolution bolsters our self -confidence that we have the capacity to change.[18]

The highest level of *teshuvah*, *teshuvah gemura*, perfect repentance, occurs only when one is again confronted with the same circumstances of the initial transgression,

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[16] H.T. 22,23

[17] H.T. 22-24.

[18] Rabbi D. Gottlieb*, Nitzavim-Vayeilech: Yes I Can,* www.YUTorah.org

and does not repeat the sinful behavior. Implicit in this concept is that a person can truly change and achieve a new beginning for him or herself.[19] This notion of man's nature, shared by Maimonides and the rabbis of the *Talmud*, is an optimistic one.[20] Human beings have both the urge to do good (*yezer tov)* and the urge for evil (*yezer ra).* The *mitzvoth* and *teshuvah* constitute the path that restores a person's relationship with God, and reinforces one's positive inclinations.

For Maimonides, patterns of behavior shape character, and character is what leads to sinful or meritorious behavior. The more a person reinforces positive character traits, the more easily the person will follow this pattern going forward and the more meritorious the individual's life becomes. Likewise, the more one repeats the expression of certain negative character traits, the more likely that individual is to repeat them and ultimately this will lead to transgressive behavior.

Sinful behaviors that are habit -forming such as gossiping, or being quick tempered, are eminently repeatable. Maimonides lists twenty-four behaviors and character traits in chapter 4:5 (A8) and cautions people to avoid these because of their habit- forming nature. These sins "have the tendency to lead the transgressor to continue to do them and which are very difficult to abandon. Therefore a person should be very careful, lest he become attached to them, for they are very bad attributes."

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[19] Yehonatan Chipman, http://hitzelyehonatan.blogspot.com/2006/09/elul-rambams-laws-of-*teshuvah*.html 3/4/09

[20] Eugene Borowitz,, *Renewing the Covenant; A Theology for the Postmodern Jew,* (NY: Jewish Publication Society, 1991) 162

(H.T.4:5)[21]Difficult as it is to desist from these behaviors, if he repents he can still have a share in *olam-ha-ba.*

In fact, for Maimonides, the power of *teshuvah* to alter man's character is so strong that it wipes out the person's previous identity. "Among the paths of repentance is for the penitent to change his name, as if to say 'I am a different person and not the one who sinned.' " [22](H.T. 2:4). (A9) Repentance gives the sinner the opportunity to start anew and be a different person than he was before.

Maimonides clearly attaches importance to *kavannah* in doing *teshuvah.* Intention matters. Therefore one "who changes his mind about the *mitzvoth* he has performed and regrets the merits he has earned saying in his heart: What value was there in doing them? …loses them all and no merit is preserved for him at all."(H.T.3:3)[23] This would indicate that it is not only the actions of *teshuvah* that matters but the thoughts and intention as well. Certainly this is consistent with Maimonides distinction of *teshuvah* motivated by fear being a lower form of atonement as compared to *teshuvah* motivated from love. Intention and motivation are crucial factors. For teshuvah to take place, the person must truly be remorseful that they ever committed the sin in the first place rather than being instrumental in seeking forgiveness for the sake of atonement.

<u>*Teshuvah* and the Perfection of Character</u>

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[21] H.T. 110

[23] H.T. 54,55.

Despite man's corruptible character, living according to the *halachah* trains a person's character to be in closer relationship to God. In his book, *In The Faith of Maimonides,* Yeshaiahu Leibowitz posits that the initial reason a person chooses to keep the *halachah* is instrumental. One does so out of a hope for reward or a fear of punishment. However, by observing the *mitzvoth,* a person grows closer to God and achieves a philosophical knowledge of and closeness to God. This will ultimately lead to his observing the *halachot* out of love of God, not for instrumental purposes. Leibowitz describes this process as a "feedback mechanism," meaning that the *halachah,* which initially serves as an educative tool, becomes the ultimate way to express love for God. [24] According to Leibowitz's reading of Maimonides, "The purpose of the study of wisdom is none other than knowledge alone; and the purpose of truth is none other than to know that it is the truth and the purpose of knowing it is to do it "[25] The vehicle for arriving to perfect knowledge is the *Torah* and observance of the *mitzvoth.*

In contradistinction to Greek philosophical thought, Maimonides thought that knowledge alone, in and of itself, was not the ultimate goal. Rather it was a means to achieve a perfect knowledge of God, which could be achieved through the observance of the *halachot.*[26] Twersky states that the ultimate goal is "disinterested love of God," meaning knowledge of God for its own sake rather than for any other reward or other purpose. [27]

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[24] Yeshaiahu Leibowitz, *The Faith of Maimonides,* (Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 1989) 24
[25] Leibowitz, *The Faith of Maimonides,*
[26] Ibid 15
[27] Isadore Twersky, *Maimonides Reader* 43

David Hartman makes a similar point. For him, both the Talmudists and Maimonides viewed themselves primarily as educators. As such, they were educating the Jewish populace from the lowest rung where the *mitzvoth* are observed from fear and self -interest, to the highest level where the individual achieves the capacity for closeness to God. Maimonides was being practical and realistic as to the nature of human beings and the Jewish populace. He was providing them with an aspirational path to keep the *mitzvoth* and to worship God from love, not fear.[28] It is a level of *teshuvah* few are able to achieve. This meta-halachic principle is clearly articulated by Maimonides in *Hilchot Teshuvah* 10:2 "One who serves God out of love occupies himself in the Torah and the mitzvoth and walks in the paths of wisdom for no ulterior motive: not because of fear that evil will occur, nor in order to acquire benefit. Rather he does what is true, and ultimately, good will come because of it." (A10)

Maimonides and Aristotle

While Maimonides' thinking resembles the Aristotelean view that perfection is the goal of humankind, the path to perfection is not a life of contemplation. Rather it is the observance of the *mitzvoth* and righteous behavior, as set forth in the Torah. Perfection comes in the form of total freedom from sin, enabling closeness between God and humans, God's covenanted partner. The ultimate reward of the righteous in *olam ha ba*, comes not as material rewards or wealth. Rather it is to "sit in the radiance of the Divine Presence…. That they will comprehend the truth of Godliness…" This concept of

[28] David Hartman, *Maimonides: Torah and Philosophical Quest,* (Jerusalem: JPS, 1986) 98

olam ha ba approaches a markedly Aristotelean view that "the only true acquisition is intellectual."[29]

Maimonides view of humankind is a hierarchical one, viewing people as differing in their capacity to keep the mitzvoth and achieve closeness with God. But Maimonides does offer the optimistic view of man that he is eminently capable of growth. "It implies that He gave them the power to learn and to understand. This attribute is present in all men: As long as a person follows the way of wisdom and righteousness he will desire them and pursue them." (H.T.6: 5)(A11) Implicit in Maimonides' thinking, is the belief that man is born with the capacity to make good and bad choices in the instant and also to improve himself over time. Given man's proclivity to sin, *teshuvah* provides people with the path toward self-improvement and ultimately to near perfection.

Maimonides and Free Will

A major tenet of Maimonidean thinking is the belief that God created man with free will. "Free will is bestowed on every human being" (H. T. 5:1) each person is responsible for his actions and the consequences thereof. But this notion immediately poses a theological enigma: How can man have free will if God is all-knowing and all-powerful, capable of seeing evil before it is committed and stopping man from committing evil acts? In Chapter 5:4,(A12) Maimonides addresses this seeming contradiction. Just as God created the four elements of water, earth, wind and fire to be a

[29] Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides,* (Ne w Haven:Yale University Press, 1980) 465

certain way in nature, so too he created man with a natural inclination, *yezer*, which inclines man to act in a certain manner. But man is born with the total freedom of choice, to choose sinful or meritorious behavior, to observe *halachot,* or not to. God, in turn, is not the detached and aloof Aristotelean god of Greek philosophy. Maimonides and the rabbis are in accord that God is not only aware of every one of man's actions, but sooner or later rewards the good and punishes the bad.

Maimonides' concept of an ever-present God is antithetical to the notion of the Greek concept of an active intelligence, of a "watchmaker" god who created the world and then left the world to run itself. In the Greek construct, human beings achieve unity with the active intelligence by leading a contemplative life of study of physics and metaphysics. In contrast, and opposed to this view, is the God of Israel who is involved in every aspect of man's life. God punishes the bad and rewards the good. That is why Maimonides considers the mitzvoth as "indispensable for human life." [30] Man achieves unity with God by the action of following the *mitzvoth,* of the *Torah.* As individuals are fallible, *teshuvah* becomes the antidote to their failure, and creates multiple opportunities for them to return to his the covenantal relationship to God.

Maimonides intertwines individual with collective responsibility. On the one hand, he holds individuals accountable for their own sins, *teshuvah*, and relationship to God. For example, in H.T. 3:5 he makes a distinction between how many times a sin will be held in abeyance from punishment for an individual versus the community. In H.T. 6:5, (A 13) Maimonides makes this distinction by citing the example, although God

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[30] Miriam Galston, "The Purpose of the Law According to Maimonides," In *Jewish Quarterly Review* 69,1 (1978) 27

reveals the future of the people by declaring that the nation will serve idols, he holds each individual, imbued with free will, responsible for idol worship. Each person had a choice to make. In conclusion, Maimonides views each individual as part of the collective. *Klal Yisrael* is the sum of each of its parts, of each individual Israelite. That is why Maimonides urges each person to weigh each and every action as if the outcome of the entire world is dependent on the choice each individual makes. Free will, in short, is an awesome responsibility.

CHAPTER : RAV SOLOVEITCHIK ON TESHUVAH

Rav Joseph Soloveitchik, the leading twentieth century Modern Orthodox theologian, wrote extensively on *teshuvah.* Although his writings are firmly rooted in Maimonides' concept of *teshuvah,* his outlook was strongly influenced by the cultural thinking of his time. He was concerned with the existential loneliness and alienation of modern Jews, and attempted to show how a life of faith and *halachah* could address these issues and bring purpose and meaning to one's existence. [31] He posited that it is one's lot to struggle in life but that through struggle one can grow and become closer to God. This optimistic view of humankind is applicable to a person's ability to do *teshuvah* as well. His expansion of Maimonides's construction of *teshuvah* is influenced by his psychologically informed perspective and by existential theology.

[31] Eugene Borowitz, 228

Many of Rav Soloveitchik's earlier thoughts on *teshuvah* are recorded in his work "Halachic Man." Pinchas Peli's book, "On Repentance: The Thoughts and Oral Discourses of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik" is dedicated to R. Soloveitchik's later thoughts on *teshuvah.* [32] The content and format of Rav Soloveitchik's lectures on *teshuvah* are based on Maimonides "Hilchot *Teshuvah*. " Rav Soloveitchik's interpretation of Maimonides' body of work on *teshuvah*, adds a 20th century contemporary perspective informed by psychological sophistication and a humane approach to the fallibility of man.

For Rav Soloveitchik, as for Maimonides, closeness to God is humankind's goal. For both, closeness is achieved through observing *mitzvoth* and *halachot*. Whereas Maimonides believes that humans draws close to God through knowledge, which in turn achieves perfection of character, Rav Soloveitchik 's "Repentant Man" yearns for closeness to God that is more akin to a modern concept of *yichud*.

> Man is born in the image of God, always remains, as it were, in the in the Divine Presence. He can never completely free himself from the religious attraction, which draws him to God, which is akin to an un-severable umbilical cord. Man cannot flee from God because God chose the human soul as s dwelling place much like a temple. [33]

Sin creates a perception of distance on the part of a human being from God. One yearns to be close to God but sin causes man to experience God as more remote and

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[32] [32]Peli's book is a compendium of the Rabbinic Council of America's annual *teshuvah shiurim,* taught by R. Soloveitchik as interpreted by Pinchas Peli, Professor of Jewish Studies and of Jewish Thought at Ben-Gurion University and a former colleague of Rav Soloveitchik's at Yeshiva University.

[33] Pinchas H. Peli, *On Repentance:The Thought and Discourses of Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik* (Lanham, Md:Rowman & Littlefield, 2004) , 14

inaccessible rendering his life meaningless. Both Maimonides and Soloveitchik recognize human beings, although not born with original sin, as essentially flawed by virtue of man's nature being sinful. Individuals are composed of both *yezer tov* and *yezer ra*. Maimonides points to the observance of mitzvoth as the palliative to this reality. For him, "The importance of repentance is that it is a process whereby a person changes from a bad man to being a good one…. man's perfection lies in the development of his intellect, an intellect that is impersonal and objective in its nature."[34]

By contrast, Rav Soloveitchik views *teshuvah* as a more fraught act. He acknowledges and perhaps glorifies the individual's struggle with a dual nature. In his typology, the perfect penitent comes closest to achieving intimacy with God by virtue of suffering and struggling. "If suffering creates, ennobles and toughens, and brings the soul nearer to the object of its yearning, then Repentant Man is the type which comes closest to attaining man's goal, for his conception and maturation owe everything to suffering."[35] Both the responsibility and the capacity rest with the person.

Pinchas Peli's interpretation of the Rav Soloveitchik's thinking, offers a typology of the ideal penitent in the figure of "Repentant Man." Accordingly, the ideal character, forged by suffering and complexity, strives toward the ultimate goal of salvation. His four distinguishing traits of Repentant Man are: a profundity of suffering, a depth of

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[34] Lawrence Kaplan J. "Hermann Cohen and Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik on Repentance*", in: Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy,* 13,1 (2004) 213-258, 220

[35] Peli, 14

experience, the ability to make decisions in light of free choice and the capacity to create."[36]

Essentially both Maimonides and R. Soloveitchik agree that it is through observance of the *mitzvoth* and man's efforts that transformation takes place. But they differ in terms of how one reaches this goal. For Maimonides, the perfection of self comes through intellectual knowledge of God. R. Soloveitchik posits that it is the struggle that refines character. Repentance is an act of self- creation brought about by one's ability to re-create oneself via the struggle. [37]

A SUSPICION OF WRONGDOING

Rav Soloveitchik's levels of *teshuvah* parallel those of Maimonides. R. Soloveitchik adds a new category to Maimonides' structure, a precursor to the first level of *teshuvah*, of self –recognition. Soloveitchik refers to this as "the feeling of sin."[38] A person does not consciously[39] recognize that he or she has sinned. Rather one feels mild discomfort, which one may deny or make light of. This dawning of recognition, described

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[36] Ibid14
[37] Kaplan 233
[38] Ibid ,222.
[39] According to Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the psyche is divided into three topographical levels, the conscious, preconscious and unconscious. The conscious is defined as "external perceptions of the ego,"(633) that is our perceptions, thoughts, memories, and emotions that are accessible to us. In contrast, the unconscious is the perceptions, thoughts, memories, and emotions that are repressed and therefore not available to us. According to Freudian theory the unconscious contains our drives and instincts and are what truly motivates our behaviors. Peter Gay ed. *The Freud Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co.,Inc,1989) 19, 633.

by R. Soloveitchik, resembles Freud's pre-conscious phase,[40] which straddles the sub-conscious and the conscious. Additionally, the sense of shame associated with this stage of *teshuvah i*s reminiscent of the developmental stage of toddlers who know they have done wrong and are afraid of being caught, rather than the later stage of guilt that comes from having internalized right from wrong known as the super-ego, and the feelings of guilt associated with wrong doing. Whereas shame is based on fear of external disapproval, or feeling that one has to conceal one's actions, guilt stems from the knowledge that one has not met one's own standards which are based on one's internalized perception of societal norms. [41]

Peli describes how the feeling of shame lingers with the person despite attempts to ward it off. One increasingly experiences depression and a profound sense of loss and repulsion, which subsequently leads the person to reject the object of his sin. Maimonides and Soloveitchik refer to this form of *teshuvah* as imperfect repentance.

STAGES OF *TESHUVAH*

At the next ascending stage of *teshuvah*, the person has a sufficient level of self-awareness to know that they indeed have sinned. This self- awareness is imperative in order for a person to begin to ascend the path of *teshuvah.* However, as an expansion of Maimonides writings in "*Hilchot Teshuvah*" on this subject, Soloveitchik makes yet a

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[40]The preconscious is the topographical level where past thoughts and experiences that are unconscious can be readily be called into the conscious. They can be made available through access to traces of memories. Freud, Sigmund, *The Anatomy of the Mental Personality, Lecture, XXXI (1932)* "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis," (Richmond: Hogarth Press 1933)

[41] Helen Merrell Lynd, *On Shame and the Search for Identity,* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1958) 21.

further distinction about the path of *teshuvah.* He observes that Maimonides chooses a curious structure to his work. Why, asks Soloveitchik, would Maimonides write four chapters on the nature of *teshuvah,* insert two chapters on free will, and then return to a discussion of *teshuvah*?

The answer, maintains Soloveitchik, is that Maimonides is speaking of two very different forms of *teshuvah*; expiation from fear in contrast to *teshuvah* from love. In the first four chapters, Soloveitchik claims, Maimonides is describing *teshuvah* based on fear, even though Maimonides does not use this term explicitly. At this level of *teshuvah,* R. Soloveitchik claims, the person recognizes the sin and begins the process of atonement. But the atonement is born out of a desire to escape the discomfort of the depression and sadness caused by his sin. As Soloveitchik states, "External pressures determine events in this case, not an inner choice which is free of outside influence and stems from a strong sense of responsibility." [42] The goal of such repentance is expiation. In contrast, repentance from love comes from a process of self-exploration leading to re-creation of the whole self. Rather than being an act of expiation, it is an act of purification and salvation.

The distinction between repentance from fear and repentance from love is first mentioned in the Talmud *Yoma* 86b. The Talmud attempts to rectify why Reish La'Kish offers what appear to be two similarly worded but sharply contrasting statements. In one he states, "Great is repentance for deliberate sins are accounted to him as inadvertent sins" and in the other he claims that "Great is repentance for deliberate sins are accounted

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[42] Kaplan, 153

to him as meritorious deeds." The Talmud answers that the two texts do not contradict each other because they describe two different situations. Reish La 'Kish's first statement refers to repentance made from fear and the second refers to repentance from love. It is Rav Soloveitchik's expansion of this Talmudic distinction that is a major theme of the book "On Repentance. "

REPENTANCE FROM FEAR

R. Soloveitchik describes repentance out of fear as an act of *kappara.* expiation. Repentance from fear is essentially expiation for a specific sin. Every Jew is worthy of expiation, and as a member of the covenant, is entitled to God's help to do *kappara* and to receive God's mercy. Therefore God in God's mercy will help a person to do *teshuva*. Repentance from fear leads a person to want to negate one's past. One is repelled by one's own actions and attempts to disassociate oneself from one's past. However, one remains the same person, someone who has not truly committed toa new course of action and therefore remains capable of sinning again. One has not truly separated oneself from the character traits and situations that lead to sin.

Such a person is granted God's mercy and is absolved from sin. But the absolution is incomplete. That person's sin, as Reish LaKish states, is now considered as an inadvertent sin. Therefore the sinner is given other methods to achieve full expiation. In the time of the Temple sacrifice, *kappara* served as the medium for complete absolution for inadvertent sins. Following the destruction of the Temple, the Yom Kippur *tefilla* became the method to seek expiation. God grants full atonement as a "transcendent

act of grace."[43] Without God's mercy man could not be absolved, because he has not turned from the path of sin.

FREE WILL

> Judaism declares that man stands at the crossroads and wonders about the path he shall take. Before him there is an awesome alternative- the image of God or the beast of prey, the crown of creation, or the bogey of existence. The noblest of creatures or a degenerate creature, the image of the man of God or the profile of Nietzsche's superman- and it is up to man to decide and choose.[44]

As does Maimonides, R. Soloveitchik believes that God creates man with free will. The world has a natural order, but within it each person has the latitude to exert one's will and to shape the world. R. Soloveitchik spells this out most clearly in "Kol Dodi Dofek" ("Hark, My Beloved Knocks.") In this work, he distinguishes between *brit goral*, Israel's fate, and *brit ye'ud*, Israel's destiny.[45] Essentially, this means that as individuals and as a nation, we are born into a certain time, culture, family and set of circumstances. This background is our fate. Given that fate, we have the possibility to determine how we live our lives. It is man's goal to turn one's fate into destiny. This is especially the case in regard to *teshuvah*. When humans struggle to control their *yezer*, they move from being the object of their fate, to the subject, master, of their destiny. Thus, *teshuvah* becomes as much about shaping the future as it is about rectifying the

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[43] Ibid, 228
[44] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halachic Man,* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983),109
[45] Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek: Listen –My Beloved* Knocks*,* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2006), 51

past. On a communal level, this means taking responsibility for humankind's suffering and moving to rectify that suffering.

As applied to *teshuvah*, one is born with *yezer hara*, a proclivity toward sinful behavior and *yezer hatov*, a positive inclination to do good. Free will gives a person the power to control his or her natural proclivity and impose one's will to shape behavior. One can channel one's urges and form one's destiny. Through self-recognition and a yearning to be close to God, a person can control one's behaviors that have led him or her astray and estranged one from God. Not only is one capable of repentance, one is able to utterly transform personality.

Just as God created a subjective world, human beings imitate God by attempting to create and shape their world. When confronted by the objective realities of fate, people struggle to interact with fate and to shape it, thereby shaping their destiny. A human being's struggle to shape the *tohu v'avohu* of existence makes one part of *ma'aseh bereshit*. [46]"Man is born an object, dies an object, but can live as a subject, as an innovator and as creator, who impresses upon his life an individual stamp."[47] Essential to the concept of free will is the understanding that it is each person, not God who makes the choices that form destiny.

Struggle, states R. Soloveitchik, is part of existence. Rather than to ask why we suffer, R. Soloveitchik focuses on how we respond to the suffering. The person driven by

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[46] Sagi A. &Dov Schwartz, ed. *One Hundred Years of Religious Zionism.(*Bar Ilan University Press, 1999)

[47]Rabbi Jospeh > Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek:Listen My Beloved Knocks* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2006) 6.

fate accepts the objective reality of suffering. But the person who works to craft his or her destiny responds to suffering by creating subjective meaning out of that experience.[48] *Halacha* becomes the path to deal creatively with the struggle, and *teshuvah* is the pen-ultimate process by which to engage and give the struggle meaning. The agony of the struggle purifies the person. [49]

But free will not only gives a person confidence. It also gives one enormous responsibility. The Talmud, Maimonides, and R. Soloveitchik all espouse the belief that each person must conduct oneself as if the fate of the world hangs on each and every one of his actions. Each sin or each merit can tilt the balance of the world. "Choice is a perpetual feeling of maximum responsibility which permits no absentmindedness even for a moment."[50]

REPENTANCE FROM LOVE

R. Soloveitchik distinguishes "repentance from love" as a far more evolved form of repentance. Whereas expiation of sin from fear is atonement for a particular sin, repentance from love connotes commitment to a complete re-creation of self. The person turns back toward God, examines his past, and transforms the past so that it can become a force for good. By so doing he becomes a new person.

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[48] Schwartz, Dov, 374
[49] Ibid, 375-76.
[50] Peli, 30

Of crucial importance is the concept that a human being stands at the center of repentance from love. Whereas in repentance from fear, God lifts up the person and through His mercy grants that person atonement, in perfect repentance, a person is the main actor. Through self-reflection and the exertion of free will, one produces a different outcome. Human beings are at the center of this self-creative process. "Repentance exhibits man at his most creative, as he remolds and refashions his personality. Soloveitchik points to the *halacha* that repentance is manifested by changing one's name. Through repentance, man recreates himself and truly deserves to be called a different name."[51]

As the person is completely transformed, he or she is not in danger of repeating the sin. Essentially it as if the person's previous behavior no longer apply to them. The person essentially has had a "rebirth of personality."[52] It is as if that person has never sinned, and is no longer in need of expiation or purification.

In contrast to repentance out of fear, repentance from love results in God forgiving out of justice rather than from mercy. This is because when one repents from love, one changes status and is no longer a sinner. The sin no longer exists and God judges the person as being meritorious. Thus, repentance of this nature is not the result of cultic sacrifice or ritual. It is the result of the self- purification that comes from self - reflection and transformation of the self.

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[51] Yizchak Blau, "Creative Repentance: On Rabbi Soloveitchik's Concept of Teshuvah", *Tradition* 28,2,(1994) 11-18, p.16
[52] Peli 175

R. Soloveitchik asserts in his book, "Halachic Man" that when God bestows *kapparah,* He is acting as the "transcendent and incomprehensible divinity," and when God acts out of justice, He is "God as our father, Companion and intimate Counselor." Lawrence Kaplan, in his article, "Hermann Cohen and Rabbi Soloveitchik, On Repentance," posits a question about the apparent paradox. Why would God forgive the person who repents from fear as an act of mercy, and forgive the person who repents from love, as an act of justice? Wouldn't one expect the opposite to be true? Kaplan responds to this paradox by citing R. Soloveitchik's *halachic* approach to Judaism. God is most accessible to an individual through the rational study of Torah and observance of the *mitzvoth,* and it is for this closeness to God that Repentant Man yearns for. [53] "It is via this ideal *halachic* world that man approaches God. We require neither miracles nor wonders to prove the existence of God, for the halachah itself bears witness to its creator."[54]

Lawrence Kaplan summarizes Rav Soloveitchik's statement on *teshuvah* from love as the following equation: "Repentance out of love=self purification (tahara)=self-sanctification=the transformation of deliberate sins into meritorious deeds=self -creation-self- redemption."[55] Repentance out of love is the outcome of man's yearning for closeness to God and is a function of his exercise of free will to transform himself into a person free of sin. Such a person can cleave to God without the impediment of sin.

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[53] Kaplan 230-231
[54] Soloveitchik,,*Halachic Man,* 85-86
[55] Kaplan 232

RECONFIGURAION OF TIME IN *TESHUVAH*

Another major contribution of Rav Soloveitchik is the relationship of the past, present and future in the process of *teshuvah* from love. In this process, time changes from a static entity to a living part of the individual.[56] Traditionally we think of time as a uni-dimensional, linear entity. The past has already occurred and is lost to us. The present is the fleeting "now" and the future is yet undetermined. Rav Soloveitchik influenced by the phenomenologist, Max Scheler, rethinks time as a living entity where the past is called into the present to be examined and reconfigured so that the past and present fuse to shape future outcome.

R. Soloveitchik applies this thinking to *teshuvah*. Regarding sinful behavior, the past sin is brought into the present through the process of self-reflection. "Man in repenting engages in an active, directed act of memory that serves to bring to light the submerged yet ever active past. The past is no longer repressed but remembered. And being remembered it loses its hold over man."[57] Accordingly, the past is no longer a fixed phenomenon. Rather it becomes something that can be brought into the present, examined and reshaped.

Lawrence Kaplan however, notes a major distinction between Scheler and R. Soloveitchik. Scheler 's focus is on the past. One examines the past but only for the sake of expressing sorrow and regret. Kaplan thinks that the natural outcome of a focus on the past is depression and despondence. R. Soloveitchik's focus and main interest is the future. A person harnesses the past in order to change the future. By regretting the past,

[56] Chaim Navon 99.
[57] Kaplan 237

one is freed from it.[58] In contrast to Scheler, Soloveitchik believes that if one is in a state of depression resulting from being stuck in the past, one cannot acquire Torah. It is only in the optimistic state of assuredness that one can change one's destiny that man can live a life of Torah and mitzvoth.[59]

Rav Soloveitchik makes a distinction between physical time and spiritual time. As the law of natural causality governs physical time, the effect is the outcome of the cause. In physical time, this realm is unidirectional. One proceeds from past, to present and on to the future. The past is fixed. The future is the logical outcome of the causes of the past.

All this is not so in the realm of the spiritual. In this realm, the past, present and future are collapsed. The past and future are actually integral parts of any given moment. All actively interact upon each other and change each other. Here, the past is not fixed. It can be changed, and in turn allow man to create a different future for himself. The meaning and value of each person's life is not predetermined. Rather it is open to interpretation as long as one is alive. Thus the past makes a meaningful contribution to the present and helps us to direct and shape our future. Understood as such, time is both linear and reversible.[60]

Thus, Repentant Man, through the prism of remorse, is able to atone for the past by virtue of the past, present and future being fluid, by regarding his or her personal

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[58] Eliezer Goldman," The Philosophy of J.D. Soloveitchik" in *Faith in Changing Times,* Avi Sagi ed., (Jerusalem: Eliner Press,1997). 177.
[59] Kaplan 242
[60] Goldman, 177, 178.

history as a part of the greater part of the narrative of the Jewish people, starting with creation until eternity.[61]

How then does the past, now made conscious, transform the sin from a negative entity, into a meritorious act, as stated by Resh LaKish? This happens by two different but complementary processes. First, the negative energy that fueled the sin is converted into positive energy that fuels the desire to act in a meritorious fashion. The source of energy is that the feeling of shame and guilt about the sinful behavior spurs the person toward God.[62] But additionally, man who has grown distant from God as a result of his sin yearns for closeness to God. It is this yearning that serves as a propellant to move him closer toward God. This desire leads to great self- discipline whereby a man has the capacity to recreate himself anew. Paradoxically then, it is the very fact that the person is a sinner that gives him the energy to grow closer to God. "Through sin man discovered in himself new spiritual sources, a reservoir of energy, of cupidity and obstinacy unknown to him before indulging in sin. Now he can sanctify all these drives and can direct them heavenward."[63]

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

R. Soloveitchik states that true atonement must take place on two levels: the intellectual-cognitive and the experiential-emotional. True repentance requires both emotion and intellect. This principle, according to Pinchas Peli, is a thread throughout R.

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[61] Ibid 177.
[62] Peli 36.
[63] Ibid 263.

Soloveitchik's theological thinking. R. Soloveitchik attributes this dual approach to faith to Maimonides' making a distinction between belief and knowledge as two separate ways to know God. It is not sufficient to believe in God. One must also be able to experience God. *Teshuvah* as well, must occur on both planes.[64]

COMMUNAL VS. INDIVIDUAL ATONEMENT AND SALVATION

As stated in the introductory chapter, Yom Kippur served from the time of the Temples, as the moment at which the community would approach God to confess their sins and atone both as a community and as individuals. We did so through our intermediaries, the priests, who offered sacrifice and prayers on our behalf. On Yom Kippur, the sacrifice of the scapegoat served to expiate the sins for the community as a whole. R. Soloveitchik makes an important distinction between a sacrifice that is brought by several people, what he refers to as a "jointly owned sacrifice" and a communal sacrifice.

According to R. Soloveitchik, the community, *Knesset Israel*, is not a "voluntary association", but rather an "ontological-essential one." "As Knesset Israel is not a sum total or arithmetic combination of such and such individuals, but a metaphysical personality of singular essence and possessing an individual judicial personality, so the individual Jew does not have an independent existence but is a limb of Knesset Israel-unless he commits such acts as cut him off from the congregation and uproot him from

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[64] Peli 25.

the community of Israel."[65] Communal atonement therefore is not achieved by and for each individual that comprises Knesset Israel. Rather it is for the totality of the legal entity, Israel as an entire community. Repentance as a member of the Jewish community is not required. Atonement for Knesset Israel is claimed as the right of the community *b'zchut avot v'imahot,* the merits of our forefathers and foremothers, as well as God's beloved partners in our covenanted relationship. We approach God with confidence and joy to claim what we consider to be our right and legacy.[66]

Shortly after the destruction of the Second Temple, Rabbi Akiva was quoted as saying, "Happy are you, O Israel? Before whom are you made clean, and who makes you clean? It is your Father who is in heaven, as it says, *'And I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean.'"* (Ezekiel 36:25). (*Yoma* 8:9) (A15) This comment was made at a time when the Jews despaired of being able to be free themselves of sin by the traditional methods R. Akiva was assuring the Jews that atonement would serve in lieu of the sacrifices that brought expiation, *kapparah,* to the community, God would free the community of sin just as one is cleansed when one immerses in a ritual bath.[67]

As it is not possible to have an intermediary in the process of purification, communal confession facilitated by a priest or a prayer leader, (subsequent to the Temple's destruction), can only be one of expiation and not purification.

Rav Soloveitchik likens repentance to the in -gathering of exiles on the day of redemption. Like Maimonides he believes that the messiah can come through the

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[65] Lonely Man of Faith 108.
[66] Peli ,215
[67] Peli 55

repentance of Israel. R. Soloveitchik poignantly states that just as man repents because of his yearning to be close to God, so on the day of redemption God will gather all the exiles, His people to the Promised Land. In a spiritual sense, every sinner is in exile from his true home. "Exile means the absence of a home and the sinner is someone who has lost his way from home."[68] According to R. Soloveitchik the Kabbalists make the analogy of an individual sinner as someone who does not have an integrated identity, just as the nation of Israel, scattered amongst the nations has a diffuse national and religious identity. Redemption, therefore, leads to integration, a reconstitution of identity. [69] Accordingly, an individual cannot reach the goal of salvation without first acknowledging and strengthening the bonds to the covenanted community of Israel.

Each penitent should come to view his or her life against the backdrop of the history of the world, starting with creation of the world and stretching into the future until the messianic era. One's life should be lived as a movement through a vessel that absorbs the traditions of the past and continues to be reshaped as it moves toward the future. Rosh Hashanah for example, is the celebration of the creation of the world, when we metaphysically bring the past into the present.

In summary, repentance is the sine qua non for Rav Soloveitchik of the wonder of a human's being created with free will. *Teshuvah* is not a supernatural act. Rather it is a human being's creative capacity, inspired by the desire for intimacy with God, which propels him or her to reshape personality, and indeed become a new person. It is one's capacity by virtue of the plasticity of time and history that makes it possible for one to

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[68] Peli 306.
[69] Goldman 189.

reevaluate the past for the sake of creating a new future. "The desire to be another person, to be different than I am now is the central motif of repentance. Man cancels the law of identity and continuity, which prevails in the "I" awareness by engaging in the wondrous, creative act of repentance. Humankind through repentance creates him or herself, as his or her own "I."[70] It is through the *tikkun* of *teshuvah* that one changes from object to subject, *machafetz le gavara.* And through *the tikkun* of *teshuvah* that one finds meaning to one's life as well as *hesed.* [71]

CHAPTER 3: GOALS OF TESHUVAH AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Teshuvah, generally translated as repentance, comes from the root *la'shuv*, which means to return. "T*eshuvah* as return suggests that our original state of being is to be spiritually and morally aligned with the divine will."[72] The goal of *teshuvah* therefore is to restore us to wholeness by being close to God. *Teshuvah* is transformational, in that the person who atones changes their status and is no longer considered a sinner.[73]

Similarly, the goal of psychotherapy is to restore the sense of psychic wholeness that the person has lost. How the psychotherapeutic goal is articulated differs, depending on the theoretical framework of each school of psychological thought. Melanie Klein, the 20th century psychoanalyst, for whom the psychological work includes both asking for

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[70] Soloveitchik, *Halachic Man* 113.
[71] Schwartz, Dov, 376.
[72] Estelle Frankel, Repentance, Psychotherapy and Healing Through a Jewish Lens, *The Behavioral Scientist*; March 1998, 41, 6.
[73] Jacob Neusner "Repentance in Judaism" in *Repentance: A Comparative Perspective,* ed. Amitai Etzioni & David E. Carney, (NY; Rowman & Littlefield Publisher's Inc, 1997), 61

forgiveness and forgiving, for example, views reparation as an ongoing "active process of striving toward completeness, whether of the head or the heart or entire being."[74] One can readily draw a parallel between the Kleinian notion of reparation[75] and the Kabbalistic concept of the physical and emotional *tikkun*, repair, which each person must do individually.[76] An important distinction, however, is that in the kabbalistic system, personal *tikkun* is connected to cosmic *tikkun.*

The desire for wholeness, serves in current times, as the primary motivation for people to choose to undergo a process of psychotherapy or teshuvah. Both teshuvah and psychotherapy are systems of change. The path to alleviate suffering for both, is reflective exploration, to determine the root cause for the pain and to seek through self reflection, understanding, and acknowledgment, to find relief from one's emotional suffering. But whereas the goal of psychotherapy can be, but does not necessitate, behavioral change, teshuvah always entails a commitment to behavioral change.

One can begin to observe differences in these two frameworks by engaging with the question of why it is that human beings suffer. The person, who turns to psychotherapy, when confronted with suffering, generally asks the question, "Why is this happening to me?" and works to relieve the suffering to restore a sense of wholeness. The issues addressed in psychotherapy are primarily psychic in nature. By contrast, within the

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[74] Joseph H. Berke and Stanley Schneider, "Repairing Worlds: An Exploration of the Psychoanalytic and Kabbalistic Concepts of Reparation and Teshuvah," In *Psychoanalytic Review*, 90, (05) October 2003, 723.
[75] Ibid, Reparation, according to Melanie Klein, is the ongoing process of repairing the relationships that one has damaged by negative thoughts, feelings and actions.
[76] Ibid,723.

Jewish framework, suffering is viewed as the objective consequence of sinful behavior[77], the consequence of which is subjective suffering on the part of the repentant individual.[78] According to Rav Soloveitchik, "Sin and punishment are always linked together. If you will, the very definition of sin is that entails paying a penalty. If punishment exists, it is because sin does too."[79] The issues addressed by the penitent can be categorized as primarily ethical and moral wrongdoing. Sin, "het, literally means something gone astray. It is a term used in archery to indicate that the arrow has missed the target. This concept of sin suggests a straying from the correct ways of what is good and straight." [80]As such *teshuvah* rectifies the wayward behavior.

Although guilt can be the catalyst for a person to seek psychotherapy, or to do *teshuvah*, each discipline views the etiology of guilt differently. Guilt, according to Sigmund Freud, emanates from external social pressure obligating the individual to conform to the society he or she lives in. Thus, a person is not born with an embedded sense of guilt. Rather, guilt arises when the person's behavior is not normative by virtue of the moral standards of that society. [81] Freud operated from the assumption that once a person recognized through insight-oriented psychoanalysis that his or her behavior was immoral, they would rectify their actions.

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[77] Sin, is the violation of God's commandments. Since people are born with both the nature to do good and bad and the freedom to choose, sinning is considered to be an expected outcome of human nature. God, as a merciful judge, forgives the repentant.
[78] Fox, David, "Suffering and Atonement as a Psycho-Judaic Construct "*Journal of Psychology and Judaism,* Vol. 22, No. 2, summer 1998.99.
[79] Peli,
[80] Reuven Hammer, *Entering the High Holy Days: A Guide to the Origins, Themes and Prayers." (*Philadelphia:JPS, 1998) 30.
[81] Navon, Chayim, *Genesis and Jewish Thought,* (New York: Ktav Press, 2008) 140.

Contemporary psychologists seem to be in general agreement that Freud's premise is generally wrong. Mere insight is usually not sufficient to change behavior.[82] A framework, in which one recognizes the problem, should be followed by a psychotherapeutic strategy to change behavior. One possible approach is to adapt the language of sin to psychotherapeutic terms, "If it proves empirically true that certain forms of conduct characteristically lead human beings into emotional instability, what firmer or better basis would one wish for labeling such conduct as destructive, self defeating, evil, sinful?"[83]

However there is another school of thought in which psychotherapists posit that although society has a communally held standard of right and wrong, that individuals who do not adhere to these standards should not be made to feel worthless and guilty, as those feelings incapacitate them and render them incapable of changing their behavior. Psychotherapy accordingly mirrors the steps of teshuvah quite closely (self recognition, confession and the determination to rectify the wrongdoing) but without the concomitant guilt and suffering.[84]

Whereas guilt is external to human nature according to psychotherapy, in Judaic thought, humans are born with an internalized capacity for guilt. Suffering is the symptom of guilt that allows one to recognize that one has sinned and to begin the

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[82] O. Hobart Mowrer, "Some Constructive Features of the Concept of Sin" *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, Vol 7, No. 3,1960,188.
[83] Ibid 186
[84] Albert Ellis, "There is No Place for the Concept of Guilt in Psychotherapy" in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* Vol 7, No3, 1960, 192.

process of teshuvah. Guilt therefore, serves a beneficial purpose and makes it possible for one to lead a moral life.[85].

Both Freud, from a psychotherapeutic stance, and Rav Soloveithcik from a religious vantage point, agree that guilt is beneficial. It helps the individual lead a moral and integrated existence, and keeps society functioning. They also agree that too much guilt can be debilitating. A person can become paralyzed by too much guilt and needs to retain optimism that he or she has the capacity to change and grow.[86]

Moshe Halevi Spero, a psychologist[87] who has written extensively on this topic, offers a point of view that blends the psychological and religious viewpoints. He states that the role of the psychotherapist today is based in large measure on the role of the *rebbe* in Eastern Europe to whom the community would turn for emotional help. The goal of the *rebbe's* work, like psychotherapy, was to alleviate suffering. Each word and gesture on the part of the *rebbe* was imbued with meaning, making him the object of what we would call transference in psychotherapeutic parlance.

In his article, "Mental Illness as Sin: Sin as Neurosis," Spero attempts to demonstrate the similarity between sin and neurosis as both stemming from and entailing psychosomatic conflicts. He defines mental illness as "the general breakdown in happiness, balance and self orientation of non-psychotic nature, associated with

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[85] Ibid, 143.
[86] Ibid, 142.
[87] Moshe Halevi Spero is a Senior Psychologist and researcher in the Department of Psychoanalysis and Religion in the Department of Psychiatry at Sarah Herzog Memorial Hospital in Jerusalem. He has written extensively on the topic of religion and psychology.

inappropriate or dysfunctional levels of anxiety, fear, guilt or mistrust." [88] Spero states that since human beings are created with both free will, and a sinful nature, they should be held accountable and responsible for their actions. "Sin then points to the mis-use (sic) of human freedom."[89]. Judaism provides the moral framework of *halachah*, which gives human beings a sense of meaning and purpose. Psychotherapy, viewed from the meta-rubric of *halachah*, uses the process of *teshuvah* to help the " sinner-as-neurotic" to correct character flaws and behaviors that are viewed as being both sinful and neurotic.

One of the greatest differences between psychotherapy and teshuvah is that the process of change in psychotherapy is determined by one of many psychotherapeutic modalities chosen by the patient and psychotherapist. The goals of treatment are generally determined by the patient's subjective standards of what constitutes a successful outcome. "Thus, the psychotherapeutic process is one in which the patient is the final arbiter of what is right or wrong for them.(sic)" [90] In effect, the patient proves his or her mental health by setting goals and deciding, based on his or her personal value structure, what constitutes a healthy outcome of psychotherapy. In general, the psychotherapist is expected not to impose his or her moral standards on the patient. If the patient were to improve for the sake of another person's approval, or by another person's value system, such as the psychotherapist's, the process would be deemed flawed. In essence the process of psychotherapy is guided by the subjective point of view of the

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[88] Moshe Halevi Spero, "Mental Illness as Sin: Sin as Neurosis." *Journal of Jewish Communal Service,* 54:2, December 1977,119.
[89] Ibid, 123.
[90] Friedman, Michelle, Yehuda, Rachel, Psychotherapy and Teshuvah: Parallel and Overlapping Systems of Change. *The Torah U Maddah Journal,* II/2002-2003. P 240.

patient. The object of psychotherapy is for the patient to experience the relief from suffering.

By contrast, teshuvah is a highly structured, institutionalized and consistent process in which it is God, not the repentant, who is the final arbiter of what constitutes successful t*eshuvah*. The penitent must seek to attain objective standards of morality and ethical ideals that are encoded for the Jewish people writ large through prescribed behaviors. "*Teshuvah* involves a return to these ideals and a conscious turning from a self-centered existence, to a God–centered one."[91] The goal is not as much the relief of suffering as it is changing one's behavior.

Another contrasting element between *teshuvah* and psychotherapy is the role of the individual within society. Psychotherapy's goal is generally the alleviation of an individual's suffering so he or she can lead a more productive and fulfilling existence. Individual *teshuvah*, on the other hand, is viewed against a wider landscape of communal repentance for the sake of bringing about the messianic era of a redeemed world. Maimonides states that each choice by each individual to act meritoriously or sinfully is to be viewed as holding the entire world in its balance.[92] (*Hilchot Teshuvah* 3:4) Thus, the process of each person's *teshuvah* has far greater consequences than just that person's life. Each person's actions affect the entire community and world in which they live.

The philosopher Edith Wyschogrod recounts her colleague, the Christian philosopher Paul Ricouer's (1913-2005) view of the dialectic tension of the individual and the communal in regard to sin and atonement. "Ricouer sees in Judaism's view of

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[91] Frankel, 815.

repentance, a transformative act, one that penetrates the heart of the individual while at the same time uncovering the communal dimension of sin. "The evil heart of each is also the evil heart of all." [93] Because repentance reveals the universality of evil in which all are implicated, individual repentance *eo ipso* is a choice the individual makes for everyone." [94]

Wyschogrod agrees with the communal aspect of Ricouer's argument but takes issue with his perception that humans are all tainted by sin. Rather, she agrees with Levinas that what humans have in common is not the taint of sin but rather a shared communal responsibility for one another.45

Too often though, aiming to address a congregant's presenting issues, rabbis have attempted to use a primarily psychotherapeutic lens. They attempt to use what Browning refers to as "eductive counseling," an approach that uses the person's value framework to address psychological and interpersonal issues rather than the values of that faith-based community.[95] And far too often, rabbis have not grounded their approach to their congregants in the richness of Jewish text and theological frameworks.

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[93] Edith Wyschogrod, "Repentance and Forgiveness : The Undoing of Time" in *International Journal of Philosophy and Religion* (2006) 60, 241.
[94] Ibid,164.

[95] Don S. Browning, *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care (*Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976) 25

An important distinction of rabbinic counseling from psychotherapy, is that rabbis are guided by a "moral imperative,"[96] and an overarching set of Jewish values. Browning makes the distinction succinctly: "The major difference between the minister (and in our case, the rabbi) and the secular psychotherapist is that the minister has a direct professional responsibility to help shape the moral universe of values and meaning."[97]

PROCESS OF *TESHUVAH* AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

Generally one arrives at either *teshuvah* or psychotherapy in emotional pain, ready to actively engage in a process of reflection and active engagement designed to bring relief from that pain. Both assume that the client/penitent is able to articulate the motivating reason for doing *teshuvah* or engaging in psychotherapy. Both work most effectively when the person is self reflective and motivated to make the necessary changes.

Moshe Halevi Spero challenges the assumption that a person is capable of recognizing sin and therefore capable of *teshuvah*. [98] In his article "To Whom, to Where, and to When Does One Return in Tehsuvah?," Spero, employs the post-modern definition of self. In post-Cartesian thinking, there is no objective self and no objective reality.

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[96] Neusner, 28.
[97] Browning, 11.
[98] Moshe Halevi Spero is Senior Clinical Psychologist and Research Scholar in the Psychoanalysis Department of the Sara Herzog Memorial Hospital in Jerusalem, Associate Professor of Social Work and Post Graduate Psychotherapy at Bar-Ilan and the author of several books.

Rather, the self is always subjective, always contextual. In light of this re-definition of self, he likens *teshuvah* to a mirror in which one sees the other in oneself. "*Teshuvah* thus construed is a type of psychic envelope for the most subtle of internal contradictions within the self. Among these contradictions are the fact that the self is, in fact, in many ways as much the "other" as it is the self." [99]

Sin and repentance, according to Spero, operate out of the same framework designed to provide a person with a structure to deal with issues of desire. In the case of *teshuvah*, the person's desire is to close the gap between the self and God caused by sin. It is through the recalling of the past, reframing and employing the language of repentance, that one reshapes the past, and draws closer to God. The anxiety that underlies the desire to repent is similar to the anxiety of a person entering psychotherapy. Both processes have the potential to help a person gain understanding, grow emotionally and spur one toward healing and wholeness. The very act of *teshuvah* is where human and God meet, where one is willing to open up to God's presence.[100]

An important distinction between *teshuvah* and psychotherapy is that whereas a person engages in psychotherapy because of a precipitating problem, *teshuvah* is prescribed for all Jews for the month of Elul culminating on a fixed day of the year, Yom Kippur. Since all observing Jews are expected to participate in this self-reflective process, and operate with the assumption that every person has something for which to repent, there is no stigma attached to this process. Stigma is a social construction that devalues

[99] Spero 156
[100] Ibid 261.

people because of a distinguishing sign or characteristic.[101] For some, contacting a psychotherapist is such a stigma. It carries a sense of failure, an admission of an internal weakness necessitating special help.

However, many more people, today, consider it socially acceptable to seek psychotherapy, especially at times of transition and crisis. Both psychotherapy and *teshuvah* assume that people are imperfect. People are encouraged to acknowledge and come to terms with negative character traits or misdeeds. Both processes are optimistically inclined to view people as capable of change. Just as Maimonides states that man can repent until the moment of death, Melanie Klein espoused that psychoanalysis was the opportunity for people to get a second chance to work through and reframe their past, thereby making it possible to live a better future. [102]Similarly, *teshuvah* that leads to *kapparah* (atonement) or t*aharah* (purification) also leads to acquittal for the sins committed. It gives the penitent the possibility of "hope, amelioration and self-amendment" [103]

RECONFIGURATION OF TIME

As discussed in the previous chapter, according to R. Soloveitchik's conception, *teshuvah* reconfigures the past. The past is brought into the present and transformed

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Stigma is a social construction that devalues people because of a distinguishing sign or characteristic. -Todd Heatherton, Robert Kleck, Michelle Hebi, Jay G. Hull, Eds. "The Social Psychology of Stigma " Monica Biernat & John F. Dovidio, *Stigma and Stereotypes* "(NY, Guilford Press, 2000) *105.*

[102] Joseph Burke and Stanley Schneider, "Repairing Worlds,"729.

[103] Edith Wyschogrod, "160, 161.

thereby allowing for a different future. Estelle Frankel, a psychotherapist and Judaic professor, views both *teshuvah* and psychotherapy as similar in this regard. Rather than *teshuvah* bringing forth a new person, as Rav Soloveitchik suggests, "Like psychotherapy, repentance enables people to come to terms with the workings of time by healing the pain and the mistakes of the past. In their defiance of linear time, both psychotherapy and repentance deconstruct the past and free the individual from its determinism."[104]

Both psychotherapy and *teshuvah* allow the person to take a prior action or an aspect of oneself that does not feel integrated into one's self concept, or in Jewish terms, a characteristic or an action that the individual deems sinful according to *halachah,* and integrates the past behavior or characteristic as part of the self. Frankel likens this to the incense that the priests used in Temple rituals in which the fragrant incense included the *chalbanah,* an acrid smelling gum resin. Separately this odor was foul but mixed with the other spices it smelled fragrant. Just as the *chalbanah* added complexity to the smell of the incense, likewise our sins and negative characterological traits add to our total personality.

"The most unnoticed of all miracles is the miracle of repentance. It is not the same thing as rebirth; it is transformation, creation. In the dimension of time there is no going

[104] Estelle Frankel, 814.

back. But the power of repentance causes time to be created backward and allows re-creation of the past to take place. [105]

FORGIVENESS

As previously stated, *teshuvah*, as defined by Maimonides has four articulated steps: recognition, confession, remorse and resolve. In the case of sins against fellow man a fifth element, that of forgiveness, is added. This seems to be the appropriate point to discuss this crucial element of *teshuvah*, as much of the literature of psychotherapy regarding repentance can be found embedded in the literature on forgiveness.

Forgiveness can be interpreted as an intra-psychic process whereby a person works through the feelings toward the person they believe has offended them, or as an interpersonal process. Judaism refers to the latter.[106] On Yom Kippur we pray for God's forgiveness. We are instructed to ask forgiveness from those we have harmed and are expected to forgive those who seek our forgiveness. Perhaps there is so much written about forgiveness in the psychology literature because of the innate difficulty people experience both asking for forgiveness and of fully forgiving when one has been wronged. Since much of this paper has focused on the person doing *teshuvah*, it behooves us to briefly review the history of interpersonal Jewish forgiveness in our texts.

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105 [105]Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Meaning of Repentance," in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, ed. Susannah Heschel [New York: Farrar, 1996] 69

106 Solomon Schimmel, *Wounds Not Healed by Time: The Power of Repentance and Forgiveness.* (New York: Oxford Press, 2002) 43.

The Torah actually has a dearth of biblical stories about forgiveness. However there are some notable ones including Abraham forgiving Abimelech, Esau forgiving Jacob for stealing his birthright, Joseph forgiving his brothers for abandoning him in the pit, and of David sparing the life of Saul. In all these cases, one can make the argument that there was an element of self- interest that motivated the person doing the forgiving. There is always some element of self -interest involved. Although many of our biblical texts, Psalms in particular, beseech God to avenge those who have wronged us, Leviticus 19:17-18 does mandate us to forgive.

> 17 You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart.
> Reprove your kinsman but incur no guilt because of him.
> 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen.
> Love your neighbor as yourself.
> I am the Lord.

It is in Second Temple literature that we begin to find sin defined as a debt that the sinner is obligated to repay the injured party. Sin as debt can be found in the later books of the Bible such as the Book of Daniel, and the works from Qumran such as Jubilees or the Damascus Covenant. According to *Mishnah Bava Kama,* 8:7 (A16) one is not required to forgive another, even if the debt was repaid, unless the offender asks for forgiveness of the person who was damaged. However, the opposite opinion can be found in the *Tosefta Bava Kama* 9:11, (A17) which states that the person who has been damaged should pray to God to forgive the sinner, even if he has not asked that he do so. Despite the differences in the two texts, the prevailing attitude in *mishnaic* times was that it would be wrong to not forgive the sinner if he has paid the debt and requested

forgiveness. [107] The prevailing attitude in rabbinic texts is to minimize the offenses of others. “Let the honor of your fellow be as dear to you as your own and do not be easily angered.” (Mishnah Avot 2:5,15)

Interpersonal *teshuvah*, according to Maimonides in *Hilchot Teshuvah*, demands that the offender ask the injured party for forgiveness three times, in front of ten witnesses, making the act of confession and forgiveness a public matter. The forgiver, if judging that the person repenting does so sincerely, is required to forgive. Thus, Judaism provides us with a script for how two people can achieve closure after one party has injured the other. In fact it is considered sinful not to forgive. Once a person has requested three times with ten witnesses present for forgiveness should the wronged party refuse to forgive the sinner does not have to continue to ask. “On the contrary, the person who refused to grant forgiveness is the one considered the sinner.” [108] (*Hilchot Teshuvah* 2:9) (A18) Maimonides goes on to say “It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and refuse to be appeased. Rather, he should be easily pacified, but hard to anger. When the person who wronged him asks for forgiveness, he should forgive him with a complete heart and a willing spirit.”[109](A19)

In contemporary times, Judaism emphasizes the importance of forgiveness. Twentieth century theologians such as Eugene Borowitz, Joseph Soloveitchik, and David Hartman emphasize that our being created in God’s image means that our behavior

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[107] Elliot N. Dorff, Arthur I. Rosett, *A Living Tree: The Roots and Growth of Jewish Law, A Centennial Publication of the Jewish Theological Seminary,* (New York: SUNY Press, 1988)158

[109] Ibid 2:10 46.

should imitate God, *imitato dei*. Therefore by forgiving those who have wronged us, we act as God would act.[110] The notion of God as a merciful and compassionate God is embedded in the Bible. The Bible, especially in the prophetic literature, provides a multiplicity of narratives of God's forgiveness despite the people repeatedly breaking their covenantal promise. The rabbis elaborated on the biblical view. Rabbi Tam's commentary on the Talmud Bavli, tractate (*Rosh Hashanah* 17:b) lists thirteen attributes of God's mercy, which include God being slow to anger, forgiving in areas that humankind could not even expect and forgiving of those who repent.

Louis Newman, the noted scholar, states that forgiveness within Judaism is distinguished by two characteristics. The first is as noted above, God is merciful, and as we are created in God's image we are instructed to act mercifully. The second point that he makes is that there is virtually no sin that God will not forgive. Ergo when a person does *teshuvah* even for the most heinous crime, we are instructed to forgive. Newman bases his premise on Maimonides' writings in *Hilchot Teshuvah*, which views *teshuvah* and forgiveness, as two complementary duties. He bases his opinion on the Jewish value of empathy, in which we are instructed to always minimize the offense of another. [111] "Newman also makes the point that each individual Jew has a responsibility to the collective. Therefore even if one has anger and acrimony toward the person who has

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[110] Mark S. Rye, et al, "Religious Perspectives on Forgiveness, " eds. McCullough, Michael E., Kenneth I., Pargament, and Carl E. Thorenson, "*Forgiveness: Theory, Research and Practice,* (New York, Guilford Press, 2000), 23

[111] Louis E. Newman, *Past Imperatives: Studies in the History and Theory of Jewish Ethics, (*Albany, SUNY Press, 1998) 89

harmed them, they must act as a covenanted member of the Jewish people and meet their obligation to forgive if the offender truly repentant.[112]

Contemporary psychotherapy has a developing literature on the subject of forgiveness, much of which focuses on helping the injured party achieve forgiveness and closure. The studies thus far have produced little empirical research, and the knowledge in this field is based on anecdotal insights from clinical cases and phenomenological studies that seek to generate models of interpersonal forgiveness based also on anecdotal reporting. [113]

Malcolm and Greenberg, two psychologists, recognizing that lack of forgiveness can give rise to mental distress, provide the therapist with a step-by-step process, a "map" by which to guide clients toward forgiveness and resolution of past injury. They view the link between capacity to forgive and capacity for empathy as a crucial underpinning for the success of this model. If a person cannot "put themselves in the others shoes" then it is extremely difficult for this process to succeed.[114] Forgiveness can be as restorative to the person granting forgiveness as to the person receiving it, not only in terms of making restitution, but in terms of restoring the moral equilibrium.

In summary, the model guides the injured party through a five- step process to bring about forgiveness and closure. " 1/The acceptance into awareness of strong

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[112] Ibid 96.
[113] Wanda M. Malcom and Leslie Greenberg, Forgiveness as a Process of Change in Individual Psychotherapy" in McCullough, Michael E., Kenneth I., Pargament, and Carl E. Thorenson, eds. "*Forgiveness: Theory, Research and Practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 2000),181,182.
[114] Ibid 180.

emotions such as anger and sadness. 2/ letting go of previously unmet interpersonal needs 3/ a shift in the forgiving person's view of the offender4/the development of empathy for the offender 5/the construction of a new narrative of self and other."[115]

Despite the fact that in contrast to *teshuvah*, this process focuses on the offended rather than on the offender, the similarities between the first and last steps of both processes are readily apparent. Self-awareness is the vital first step of both psychotherapy *and teshuvah* without which nothing else can happen. And the ultimate outcome of steps three and four is that the offended party reconstructs both the offense and the offender as dramatically different than originally conceived. If either of these processes is successful, both parties are given the ability to start their relationship anew.

SUMMARY

Psychotherapy and *teshuvah* are two systems that bring about relief for pain and suffering caused by behaviors or thoughts that produce shame or guilt due to behaviors that feel wrong and incongruous with that person's self-conception. This fragmentation of self, can either lead one to engage in a psychotherapeutic process or in the process of *teshuvah.* Both allow the individual to revisit past errors and to understand and learn from past mistakes how one can make better decisions in the future. However the relationship to the suffering that leads one to seek either is diametrically opposed. Although pain is the ultimate motivator in seeking to engage in either process, the goal is different. Whereas one seeks psychotherapy to relieve pain, within the framework of *teshuvah*,

[115] Ibid 179

suffering is viewed as the catalyst to relieve the sense of sinfulness and in some cases to help one grow closer to God.

A major distinction between psychotherapy and repentance is the difference in the two in regard to the issue of morality. Whereas psychotherapy in general deliberately suspends moral judgment, (but not moral standards), morality is a basic precept of *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* assumes the existence of external moral principles and commandments, *halachot*, to which Jews should adhere, and considers moral behavior to be part of a person's sense of well being.[116] The psychotherapist considers it professionally wrong to impose a set of moral standards on a patient or to articulate at the beginning of psychotherapy what the goals of the process should be. By contrast, the process of *teshuvah* demands an external yardstick by which a person can determine what it is he or she should be repenting for. One is held accountable not to oneself, but to God.

As I hope this thesis has demonstrated thus far, *teshuvah* is a concept that has, like most Jewish theological concepts, been informed and changed over the course of Jewish history by the ethos of its time. As we trace the history of *teshuvah* through Jewish history we witness its evolution from a sacrificial cultic practice to one, refined today, by our more sophisticated knowledge of human behavior. We see glimmers of psychological sophistication in Maimonides seminal work *Hilchot Teshuvah.* Rav Soloveitchik, who himself was immersed in the discourse of psychology, phenomenology and existentialism, reframes *teshuvah* in a more psychologically sophisticated fashion. And the last chapter on the interface between psychology and *teshuvah* highlights some of the

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[116] Frankel 820.

recent thinking about how psychotherapists steeped in Jewish knowledge have worked to articulate what the similarities and differences are between the two.

In the case of our biblical characters that we will examine in the next chapter, as in the case of many modern day patients, the two actors, the offender and the offended, are often inexorably linked by family ties, which makes resolution even more important to the continued dynamics of the family.

CHAPTER 4: BIBLICAL MODELS OF *TESHUVAH*

For us, the Jewish people, Torah has historically been and remains the ultimate source of authenticity, and for many, of authority as well. The Torah is the source of our master narratives, those archetypal stories that serve as morally rich models for our behavior, both positive and negative. This is especially true for the well-known and popular stories of our forebears in Genesis.

To further explore the notion of *teshuvah* in our tradition, I have chosen three especially pertinent biblical stories: 1/ that of Adam's response to God's confronting him about eating from the Tree in the Garden of Eden, 2/Cain's response to the murder of his brother Abel, and, 3/ the rapprochement between Judah and Joseph. These stories not only provide examples of some aspects of *teshuvah,* they also demonstrate ascending levels of *teshuvah* in our characters. By grounding the concept of *teshuvah* in the archetypal characters of the Torah, we provide ourselves with paradigmatic role models, and strengthen and enrich the moral claim of *teshuvah* for present times. The behaviors and motivations of these figures have raised many questions for the commentators over

the centuries -- and they continue to do so. Each generation, including our own, enters into the dialogue not only with the primary text, but also with the various opinions expressed over the centuries. In this spirit, I have entered into the dialogue without regard to the historical sequence of the commentaries for the sake of finding the relevance of these master narratives as models for our own *teshuvah.*

ADAM: THE FIRST SINNER

From the very beginning of time, human beings have had to grapple with the consequences of breaking God's commandments. Adam and Eve, the first couple, receive the first prohibition from God. "…Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat. But as from the tree of knowledge, of good and bad, you must not eat of it, for as soon as you eat from it, you shall die." (Genesis 2:16,17) As we well know, Adam and Eve did eat from the tree, and then were confronted by God for having broken God's prohibition. Until Adam and Eve violated God's prohibition and ate from the tree, they were sin-free. Afterwards, according to *Midrash haGadol*, *yezer hara,* the evil inclination, entered their souls. (A20)

Seforno, the fifteenth century Italian commentator, views the snake in the Garden of Eden as synonymous with Satan and as equivalent to *yezer hara*. The serpent insinuates itself into the environment so that it is virtually indistinguishable from its natural surroundings, thereby becoming a greater danger than a more obvious obstacle. Likewise, the evil inclination is present in everyday life, where one would least expects to encounter it. (A21)

Certain commentators, such as Abavarnel, the late 13th century Spanish commentator, posit that humans had the ability to distinguish right from wrong even before eating from the tree of knowledge. God could only forbid Adam and Eve from eating from the tree if they had free will to obey or disobey God's commandment. Free will was the very essence of having been created human.[117]According to Abavarnel, the knowledge gained after eating from the tree was that Adam and Eve learned human and illusory values in lieu of the eternal God-given values.

God asks Adam, "*Ayeka*," giving Adam the chance to recognize, acknowledge and confess that he had sinned. But Adam fails God's test. When God calls him, rather than acknowledge his sinful actions, he blames Eve. The *midrash* by Rabbi Eliezer states:[118] (A22)"Adam said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of all worlds! When I was alone, I did not sin against Thee. But the woman whom Thou hast brought to me enticed me away from Thy ways, as it is said 'The woman whom you gave by me, she gave me from the tree and I ate.' (Genesis 3:12) Adam lacked the overt recognition that he had sinned. This shortcoming was what Maimonides called, *ha ikar shel ha davar*, the essential (missing) ingredient. Without cognizance of his misdeed, it was impossible for Adam to reflect on his behavior and express remorse for his sinful ways.

Both psychological change and *teshuvah* require the capacity of self-awareness, that which in psychological terms is called an observing ego. *Teshuvah*, which ultimately

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[117] Nechama Leibowitz, *New Studies in Bereshit/Genesis,* (Israel, Maor Wallach Press, 1972)18

[118] Gerald Friedlander (translated and annotated), *Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer* (New York, Hermon Press, 1916) 98

leads to recreation of the self, according to Rav Soloveitchik, can only begin with the clear recognition that one has erred. Adam lacked an observing ego. Instead of responding to God's "*ayeka"* by acknowledging his wrongdoing, he projects the responsibility for his breaking God's commandment onto his wife Eve.

And yet, while falling short of full recognition, it is clear that Adam and Eve felt that something was amiss. Soloveitchik contends that Adam and Eve must have had an awareness that they had erred. Otherwise, why would they have hidden from God? He posits that Adam "felt the ache of sin even before understanding the nature of sin, even before he knew he sinned…. he had no awareness of sin only an unidentified sense of sin, a sort of inexplicable organic, primitive feeling."[119] He views this sensation as a lower level of consciousness, a precursor to knowledge, recognition or understanding, what Freud referred to as the pre-conscious.[120] The Radak, Rabbi David Kimchi, the 12th century sage, in his commentary on Genesis, states that Adam and Eve were intelligent enough to know that God knew their whereabouts. They hid because that is the nature of what human beings do when they are ashamed. "The Torah merely describes that they reacted in the time honored fashion when one is ashamed and wishes to hide the source of their shame."[121],[122]

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[119] Pinchas H. Peli , *On Repentance, The Thought and Oral Discourse of Rabbi B. Soloveitchik* (New York: Paulist Press,1984) 148,
[120] See page 24 of the thesis for a discussion of the concept of shame.
[121] Eliyahu Monk, *Hamalchut Hameshulash,* (Brooklyn, Lambda Publishers, 2003),124.
[122] Nechama Leibowitz, 34 Alternatively, Nechama Leibowitz , the biblical scholar, states that Adam and Eve knew they had sinned. In general human beings are in fear and awe of God. But when they have sinned, even before they are punished, they are "given up to fear and awe.[122] "When he heard the divine voice he was frightened and

Adam and Eve were punished for their sin in a myriad of ways. Prior to the eating of the fruit they were "*basar echad*," one flesh. Seforno views the cleaving of two people as one as possible only between two people who have completely shared goals and purpose. (Seforno 2:24). (A23) In like fashion, Maimonides speaks of the highest rung of relationship as being one where couples are united by a common vision of shared purpose.[123] One punishment, according to Seforno, was that Adam would rule over Eve, perhaps as a punishment for Adam's placing the blame on Eve for his breaking God's commandment. God's punishment is the creation of a breach in the intimacy of their relationship. In effect, they would no longer be one flesh and instead Adam would rule over Eve.

By eating from the tree of good and evil, Adam and Eve no longer were at one with themselves, with each other or with God. Their sense of *shlaymut*, wholeness, was replaced by the dialectic tensions of competing urges. The world was now a place of divisions and distinctions. They recognized the difference in their bodies, felt ashamed and therefore covered themselves with fig leaves. "Eden, the expression of an undivided life, has already begun to slip away …For everything is now separate, divided,

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hid himself, as it says (Genesis 3:10) 'I heard Thy voice and I was afraid.' " She also teaches that we can learn not only from Adam's example of how we hide from our sin, but also where we choose to hide. She quotes Cassuto's commentary *From Adam to Noah.* There we learn that although Adam and Eve tried to hide from their sin, they could not erase the memory of their sin. Thus they hid amidst the very trees where they had sinned, serving as a constant reminder of their sin."

[123] Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, ed. *Rambam's Commentary on Avot With Shemonah Perakim* (Jerusalem: Moznaim, 1990) 66,67

dialectical." [124] The ultimate, long-range goal in this lifetime, and the hope for messianic times, according to Rav Soloveitchik, is for humans to restore the sense of *shalymut* that Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden of Eden prior to eating from the tree. Maimonides and Rav Soloveitchik in particular, view life as an ongoing struggle and yearning for the never-ending search for *shlaymut*, a state which we continually strive to achieve through *teshuvah*, rather than what we fully expect to happen in our lifetime.

The Jewish concept of a covenanted relationship with God depicts a relationship of unequal partners. Even though the covenant engenders responsibilities for both humankind and God, God is the dominant and more powerful figure. Even if we agree with Abraham Joshua Heschel and conceive of God as needing a relationship with human beings, God remains the more powerful partner in that relationship.[125] Mutuality, the ideal of many a modern couple's relationship, is impossible in any situation where there is domination of one partner over the other. The value of mutuality rather than domination is summed up by the wide ranging thinker, Robert Wright "On balance, over the long run, non-zero-sum situations produce more positive sums than negative sums, more mutual benefit than parasitism. As a result, people become embedded in larger and richer webs of interdependence."[126] As modern thinkers, it is possible for us to project our sensibility onto Adam and Eve, and interpret their punishment as being consigned to a relationship marked by dominance, rather than mutual benefit.

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[124] Arthur Waskow, *Godwrestling-Round 2* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights,1996)
[125] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man,* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux,1955) 198
[126] Robert Wright, *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny*. (New York: Pantheon Press, 2000) 81

As noted above, Adam did not have a developed ability for self -reflection. One of the more poignant *midrashim (*A24) states that years later after Cain has murdered his brother Abel, Adam encounters his son Cain. He is taken aback that Cain is still alive, having assumed that God killed Cain as punishment for having murdered Abel. Cain explains that he confessed and repented. Adam is bereft wishing that he would have known of the power of *teshuvah*. At that point he rises, confesses and composes the Psalm, "It is a good thing to confess (the root of both *l'hodot* and *vidui* is *y-d-h*=to confess, to acknowledge) (your sins) to God." (Psalm 92:1)[127] Rav Soloveitchik states that it is possible for human beings to confess at any point in their lives, as Adam was portrayed as doing. Maimonides teaches us in *Hilchot Teshuvah*, that *teshuvah* is possible to the point of death. (*Hilchot Teshuvah* 2:1)

Adam is humankind's first sinner. The commentators conflict over whether Adam actually had free will and therefore the ability to break God's commandment. The text appears to inform us that after eating from the tree, both Adam and Eve sensed that they had done something wrong. But this sense was not a fully developed consciousness of having erred. Rather, it was more of a precursor to a fully developed sense of right and wrong. Nor was Adam willing or able to acknowledge his own responsibility for breaking God's commandment. He externalized the blame onto Eve and also onto God for having given him Eve as his partner. Thus, Adam represents a low level of *teshuvah* as he has yet to fully take the first step of *teshuvah*, which is self-recognition of one's sinful behavior.

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[127] Please note that the more common reading and the JPS translation of *lehodot* is to praise.

CAIN: THE FIRST PENITENT

Nehama Leibowtiz points out that Adam was the first man to sin against God. For his part, Cain was the first to sin against his brother and by extension against humankind.[128] Whereas Abel, the shepherd, offers God "the choicest of the firstlings of his flock," Cain merely brings gifts "from the fruit of the soil." God rejects Cain's gift whereby Cain becomes angry and dejected. In the following passage God chides Cain for his response.

> Surely if you do right,
> There is an uplift (*se-at)*
> But if you do not do right,
> Sin crouches at the door;
> Its urge is toward,
> Yet you can be its master. (Genesis 4:7)

Leibowitz offers two commentators' explanation of the word *se-at* in the verse. Whereas Rashi defines *se-at* as forgiveness, Ibn Ezra defines it as a lifting up. Either translation of this verse renders us an optimistic outlook on the human capacity to both grow and to repent.[129] Cain, however, rather than hearing God's words as encouragement to try to improve his gift, is enraged. Furthermore, the second part of this passage serves as a warning to Cain to subdue his *yezer hara.* Maimonides' warning that the evil

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[128] Nechama Leibowitz 43.
[129] Ibid ,43.

inclination has to be expelled quickly or it can become dominant is reminiscent of the biblical admonishment to expel the *yezer hara*. (H.T. 7:3).

Like his father Adama before him, when God asks Cain *ayeka*, where are you, giving him the chance to confess his sin, Cain responds with shame at having been "caught." But whereas Adam hid from God, Cain does not quell his *yezer hara* and succumbs to his rage by murdering Abel, thus converting his shame into guilt.[130] The experience of guilt presumes that a person has free will to either commit the act, and awareness that one has violated societal norms. Cain was enraged by God's refusal of his gift. By murdering his brother Abel, he attempted to escape from his feelings of worthlessness and jealousy toward his brother who had merited God's approval. His act of murder was a proactive move to avoid the passive feelings of shame that he had begun to experience.[131] Seen this way, Cain's response to God can be viewed as a "fear of failure hidden behind a façade of courage and bravado."[132]

However, there is another prevailing opinion about Cain's behavior. Although it made the commentators of *Midrash Rabbah* uncomfortable, they are critical of God for allowing Cain to kill Abel. Another commentary, *Midrash Tanchuma*, actually questions how Cain could have even known that murder was possible. "Cain said to Him. 'Master of the Universe, never before have I encountered death, nor have I beheld a dead person;

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[130] Shame/guilt- for a distinction between the two, see the Soloveitchik chapter page.
[131] Rein Nauta, "Cain and Abel: Violence, Shame and Jealousy", *Pastoral Psychology,* Volume 58, Number 1,Febuary 2009.
[132] Ibid

how could I possibly have known that if I pummeled him with a stone he would die?'" [133]

In some *midrashim* the responsibility for Cain's actions are shifted back to God. Essentially the commentators ask the question: How can Cain, imbued with an evil inclination and not given sufficient knowledge to know his actions could lead to fratricide, be held accountable for murder? (A25)

> As soon as the Holy One blessed be He said unto him: "Where is thy brother Abel?" Cain replied: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Thou art the keeper of all creatures; notwithstanding thou dost seek him at my hand? To what may this be compared? To a thief who stole articles by night and got away. In the morning the gatekeeper caught him and asked him: Why did you steal the articles? To which the thief replied: I stole but did not neglect my job. You however, your job is to keep watch at the gate. Why did you neglect your job? Now you talk to me like that? So too, Cain said: I did slay him because thou didst create in me the evil inclination. Thou art the keeper of all; yet me Thou didst allow to slay him? Thou it was that didst slay him; for hadst Thou accepted my sacrifice the same as his, I would not have been jealous of him.

Midrash Tanchuma also takes this stance questioning why God has not intervened in the brothers' fight. (A26)

> The words *crieth unto Me (elai)* however may be interpreted as "Crieth against Me (*alai)* " For example if two men are fighting together and one of them is killed while a third person stands by and does not attempt to separate them, against whom does everyone complain? Do they not complain against the third person? Hence *Crieth unto Me* actually means *Crieth against Me.*

They also question why God, as witness to this fight did not step in and prevent the murder.

> This sentiment is also present in *Bereshit Rabbah.* (A27)

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[133] Samuel A. Berman*, Midrash Tanchuma:Yelamdeynu* (Hoboken: Ktav Press,1996)30

> R. Simeon b. Yochai said: It is difficult to say this thing, and the mouth cannot utter it plainly. Think of two athletes wrestling before a king; had the king wished he could have separated them. But he did not so desire, and one overcame the other and killed him, he (the victim) crying out (before he died), "Let my cause be pleaded before the king! Even so, THE VOICE OF THY BROTHER'S BLOOD CRIES OUT AGAINST *ME*.

In summary, whereas certain commentators posit that Cain, who had free will, was responsible for murdering his brother, and therefore needed to do *teshuvah*, others defend Cain as not responsible for his actions. According to them, Cain could not have known that murder was possible, or that he could actually kill his brother, and because God had the capacity to end the fight between the brothers and did not do so. If one were to follow this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, Cain would not need to atone for killing his brother.

For those who posit that Cain bore responsibility for his actions, God's punishment was just and was uniquely suited for him. Cain was condemned to be a nomad and wander the face of the earth. Rabbi Norman Cohen, the modern *midrashist*, posits that Cain is to be cut off from the very source of his income as a farmer and his identity as a tiller of the soil, thereby enduring self-alienation and loss of identity.[134]

Cain responds to his punishment with the words, "My punishment is too great to bear." (Genesis 4:13-14) Although this is a shift from Cain's previous response, "Am I my brother's keeper?" the ambiguity of the verse's meaning has given forth to differing interpretations by the commentators about the true intent of Cain's words. Did he shift

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[134] Norman Cohen *Self, Struggle and Change: Family Conflict Stories in Genesis and Their Healing Insights For our Lives.(*Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005)56

from the defiance of *ayeka* to acknowledging his sin and responsibility for murdering his brother? Or was he merely bemoaning the severity of his punishment?

Seforono, for example, posited that Cain, finally recognizing God's omnipotence, understood that God knew every detail of what humankind did and felt. Therefore not only did God know that Cain had murdered Abel, but that Cain's sole motivation in doing *teshuvah* was to fill God's expectation, rather than to express true remorse. If in fact this were the case, Cain would not have truly atoned and would not ever merit forgiveness or protection from retribution.[135] (A28)

Bereshit Rabbah (A29) interpreted this sentence somewhat differently. Cain's despair was due to Cain's assessment that Adam's transgression had been merely to eat from the forbidden tree. For this comparatively minor infraction he was driven from the Garden of Eden. Cain's sin of murder was so much greater than Adam's that he uttered this sentence in despair of ever being able to atone for his wrongdoing.

Cohen, however, interprets Cain's statement as the beginning of his *teshuvah*, as a shift from arrogance to vulnerability. Cain now recognizes that he has transgressed and pleads with God for forgiveness. By using the word "*avon,"* sin, Cain acknowledges that he has sinned and confesses. Cohen translates the word *mi-neso,* rather than as "to bear" as to "be forgiven" which can be found in earlier biblical translations. Translated thus, Cohen posits that this verse is actually Cain's prayer to God for forgiveness.[136] Cain becomes the first penitent in the Torah. Cain's ability to move from initial defiance when

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[136] Norman Cohen 58.

confronted by God, to recognition and acknowledgment of his sin, shows the human capacity for atonement.

God's justice and mercy is displayed in Cain's punishment. Like his father, his punishment is to be cut off from the very land that has provided him with sustenance. "Adam's being driven from the garden to till a landscape of thorn and thistle is replayed here in God's insistence that Cain is cursed by the preposition can also mean of or from the soil (*adamah*) that had hitherto yielded its bounty to him. The biblical imagination is equally preoccupied with the theme of exile (this is already the second expulsion) and with the arduousness and precariousness of agriculture, a blessing that can easily turn into a blight."[137] God's mercy is evidenced by marking Cain as having God's protection so he can complete his *teshuvah*, and by God's ultimate forgiveness of Cain for his sin. Cain is able to reconstruct his life. Like his father Adam, he is allowed to settle East of Eden, in the land of Nod, viewed by Rav Soloveitchik as a place of asylum and God's protection, and is able to raise a family and work the land.

Thus, Cain begins his journey as a sinner who externalizes the responsibility for his actions onto God as did Adam his father. But in contradistinction to his father, Cain, after initially denying his sin, starts the process of *teshuvah* by acknowledging his sin of fratricide, confessing it, and taking responsibility and ownership for his behavior. He serves his punishment of being a nomad but does so under God's protection and then is allowed to continue to live his life. Thus, he becomes the Bibles first penitent and achieves a higher level of *teshuvah* than did his father.

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[137] Robert Alter *The Five Books of Moses,* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004) 30,31

JUDAH AND JOSPEH

This famous story of the confrontation and reconciliation of the brothers in Egypt is the culmination of the longest story of the Bible, a story of jealousy, deception, and intrigue. It is also the archetypal story of two brothers, Joseph and Judah, who overcome their character flaws to achieve perfect *teshuvah* and forgiveness, which in turn permits the reconstruction of the family. The chapter opens with the words, **"**Vayigash elav Yehudah," Judah approaches Joseph, heralding the confrontation between these two powerful men. Joseph, the ox[138], the Egyptian viceroy, and Judah the lion, out of whom would emerge the nation of Judah and one day the messiah, confront each other over the fate of their brother Benjamin. Joseph, considered to be the paragon of righteousness by many of the traditional commentators, stands in contrast to his brother Judah, considered to be a model of one who transforms from sinner to penitent by virtue of *teshuvah*. According to *Midrash Tanchuma*, only the lion could rise up against the ox. (Vayigash gimmel) Joseph, seen as the archetype of power of the Israelites in the Diaspora, can be defeated only by the progenitor of the Israelite monarchs and the messiah, his brother Judah.

AS we learn in Genesis chapter 44, Joseph places the silver goblet in his brother Benjamin's sack as a test for his brothers. When the theft is "discovered," he allows his brothers to leave and demands only that Benjamin stay. Joseph has constructed a situation reminiscent of his own. Will the brothers leave, and abandon Benjamin, thereby

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[138] Ibid 1053 (based on Deuteronomy 33:17.)

breaking their father Jacob's heart and recreating the situation of the brothers' throwing Joseph into the pit?

Joseph initially declares that only the brother who has stolen the goblet will be punished. The others will go free. But when the goblet is discovered in Benjamin's sack, Judah states that all the brothers were responsible for the theft and should all become slaves, thereby magnifying the punishment meted out by Joseph. Aviva Zornberg, the modern biblical commentator, states that the reason Judah asks for a greater punishment was that he blurred the past transgression of the brothers selling Joseph to the Ishmaelite and the current situation with Benjamin.[139]

Joseph declines Judah's emotional reaction and responds by citing a righteous standard of justice. Only the guilty brother should be punished. "The very force of Joseph's reply ("Far be it from me!") expresses his image of himself as a rational, just ruler: in a civilized society this is obviously the right sentence. It reflects the thrust of Abraham's argument with God over Sodom, for example: Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty?"…*Far be it from You!* Shall not the judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:23,25) The very nub of justice, human or divine is this distinction between innocent and guilty."[140]

Judah responds to Joseph's claim for righteous justice with a plea for mercy and compassion for his family. When confronted by the same circumstances, the choice to either rescue or abandon his brother, Judah, who was originally the one who conceived of

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[139] Aviva Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Beginning of Desire: Reflection of Genesis,* (New York: Doubleday, 1995) 316
[140] Ibid ,316.

the plot to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites, therefore the culpable party, unable to bear the thought of his father's pain, offers himself as a slave in Benjamin's stead. Clearly, one question for the commentators was why Judah chose to make himself the personal guarantor for his brother Benjamin. *Bereshit Rabbah* offers an exegesis to this passage.

> Said Joseph to him: 'Judah, why art thou the spokesman: surely some of thy brethren are older than thou! 'Nevertheless,' he replied 'they are all without responsibility, but as for me, my bowels contract with anguish.' 'Why so?' 'Because I have become surety for him.' He queried. 'With silver?- I will give it to thee. With gold?- I will give it to thee.' 'Neither with gold nor silver, he answered 'but thus said I to him (Jacob): "I will be under a ban in the future world which is called 'days' (if I do not bring him back)," ' as it says, *If I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for all days. (ib. XLIII,9)* [141] (A30)

Judah was clearly concerned that were he unable to do *teshuvah*, he find himself in the same situation and unable to act differently, that he would be punished for all eternity, an interesting juxtaposition for the biblical progenitor of the messiah. By stepping forth and offering himself as surety, he became the paradigm of "*teshuvah gemurah*," complete atonement.(*Hilchot Teshuvha* 2:1) The *midrash* tells us that Judah was willing to do whatever it would take to bring about his brother's freedom. "I come whether it be for battle, for conciliation or for prayer."

Judah's concern for his father's anguish is palpably different than the seeming indifference in which he and his brothers' responded to their father's grief when Jacob thought Joseph had been killed by wild beasts. His speech to Joseph is "at once a moving

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[141] Bereshit Rabba 867

piece of rhetoric and the expression of profound inner change."[142] Judah is a dynamic figure a sinner who repents, confesses and ultimately atones.

Our fallibility as human beings makes us sympathetic to Judah, who despite being a flawed character is able to transform and atone. He inspires us to believe that humans are capable both of profound change and of repentance. The Talmud states that "where the repentant stands, even the utterly righteous cannot stand." (*Berachot* 34:b) It is only by being a sinner and undergoing the process of *teshuvah* that an individual can prove himself or herself capable of perfect *teshuvah*. A righteous person such as Joseph has not proven himself capable of complete repentance.

Joseph is however the archetypal figure in terms of forgiveness. The Torah tells us that he does not reveal his identity to his brothers until the very end of this climactic story. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, chief rabbi of the United Kingdom, reviews the various motivations that Joseph waits to reveal himself to his brothers, such as revenge, or fulfillment of his dream that his brother's would bow to him. Sacks concludes that Joseph's motivation is that he wishes to guide them through the stages of *teshuvah* so they can make complete atonement.[143] When he finally reveals himself to his brothers, Joseph states: "God has sent me ahead of you to ensure your survival on earth and to save your lives in an extraordinary deliverance." (Genesis 45:7) Joseph attributes his brother's betrayal to divine providence. Thus he acts as the paradigm of forgiveness. Maimonides urges us to aspire to be generous in how we forgive.

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[142] Robert Alter, 259
[143] Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks, Genesis: *The Book of Beginnings, Covenant and Conversation :A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible*, (Jerusalem: Koren Publishers 2009) 306

> It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and refuse to be appeased. Rather he should be easily pacified, but hard to anger. When the person who has wronged him asks for forgiveness, he should forgive him with a complete heart and a willing spirit. Even if he aggravated and wronged him severely, he should not seek revenge or bear a grudge. (Hilchot *Teshuvah* 2:10)

The confrontation between Judah and Joseph provides us with two very different role models of exemplary behavior. Both brothers have served us as examples of leadership, righteousness, perfect *teshuvah* and forgiveness. They teach us, as do Adam and Cain, that as human beings we are flawed but also capable of varying degrees of reinventing ourselves. Why does Judah, who is so flawed, and not Joseph, who is the paradigm of righteousness, become the progenitor of the line of monarchs and the messiah? Sacks answers this question by stating that it is Judah's capacity to change that makes him worthy. "Callousness has been replaced by concern. Indifference to his brother's fate has been transformed by courage on his behalf. Judah is willing to suffer what he once inflicted on Joseph."[144] It is this capacity to recreate oneself that is the mark of perfect *teshuvah.*

In summary, these three stories in the Book of Genesis demonstrate ascending levels of *teshuvah*. Adam, the Bible's first sinner, exhibits no remorse for breaking the first negative commandment, just shame. Cain, the first penitent who like his father initially denied his culpability, ultimately demonstrates remorse, confesses his sin and serves his punishment. Judah is the paragon of complete repentance. When faced with the same set of circumstances he chooses to act meritoriously. And Joseph serves as a model of forgiveness. When it becomes abundantly clear that Judah is fully atoned, Joseph is able to fully forgive his brothers. Thus the Bible provides us with ascending levels of

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[144] Sacks, 313.

teshuvah to which we can aspire. These powerful master stories teach us that *teshuvah* makes it possible to recreate one's life, and that repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation can bring healing to individuals and estranged family members.

CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING

As a psychotherapist by training and now on the threshold of being ordained as a rabbi, I have asked myself what is distinctive about the two roles, that of rabbi and that of psychotherapist. When and how can the two be most potently combined to improve the lives of congregants? Congregants often turn to clergy as pastoral counselors, for help with coming to terms with either having been damaged by, or having damaged, another person. They desire to make peace with the other or are ill at ease with their own behavior.

Clearly, the two roles of rabbi and therapist, commanding respectively Jewish wisdom and psychological insight, should inform and enhance each other. As mentioned in this thesis, Spero likens the modern day psychotherapist to the traditional *rebbe* of the Eastern European *shtetl* to whom members of his community would turn at times of emotional distress. While less widely than in the past, those Jews who are confronted with inner turmoil about past transgressions or about forgiving another, still turn to their rabbi. Some do so in place of seeing a psychotherapist, and others do so in addition. In fact one can readily see where today's psychotherapeutic culture "may unconsciously derive, albeit it in secular

form, from the ancient Jewish formula of *teshuvah,*"[145] and I would argue, in turn, influence how we currently think of *teshuvah.*

The similarity of circumstance that leads congregants to turn to a rabbi and would-be patients to seek professional counseling raises an important issue for rabbis: They need to know their limitations and be able to determine when a congregant would be better served by a referral for psychotherapy. Clearly if a congregant is not functioning in the major domains of their life, is in clear distress, or manifests acute symptoms of depression or anxiety, the rabbi should make a referral. As critical as this issue may be, it is not in the purview of this thesis to explore when such a referral is needed, but it is worthy of mention.

But the congregants who come to a rabbi do so in a different fashion than they would engage a psychotherapist and for a different motivation. Such congregants may well have a pre-existing relationship with the rabbi, and they probably have some familiarity with Jewish life and the congregation. Quite possibly, they are yearning to draw closer to the Jewish community, and perhaps even to God. Possibly they are seeking to address their pain or guilt in the context of the principles and precepts of Judaism.

The rabbi's role in such circumstances is quite different than that of the psychotherapist. A deep understanding of the Judaic concept of *teshuvah* can instruct and remind rabbis that our professional mission and potential differs from that of psychotherapists. In part the rabbi is to be the *moreh derech* for his or her

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[145] Friedman and Yehuda, 40.

community to provide the Jews he or she serves with optimism, moral and textual guidance and support along the journey to *teshuvah*. As rabbis we address troubled and remorseful individuals, help them to process their pain, and set them on a path to wholeness. The structural, theological, moral and ethical framework, and guidelines of teshuvah, add depth and perspective to rabbis functioning in this domain. As creators and leaders of sacred communities, our responsibilities and potential extend to connecting individual penitents to *Klal Yisrael,* to the places, people and thinking within Judaism. In guiding congregants in their processes of *teshuvah*, we can help situate them within a community of obligation, commitment and support.

So how can rabbis draw upon Judaism's evolving and multi-layered concept of *teshuvah* to respond to their troubled congregants? For many rabbis, *teshuvah*'s potential as both source and inspiration for rabbinic practice remains to be tapped and developed. As recounted in the previous chapters, the rabbinic formalized structure of *teshuvah* grew out of the ancient concepts of *kapparah* and sacrificial atonement. Over the years the locus of *teshuvah* shifted from the Jewish people writ large to the individual. *Teshuvah* ultimately evolved into the contemporary, psychologically infused concept that exists today.

Rabbis, as links to the covenant and to God, should think of themselves as moral-pastoral guides, *more-ey derech*, who lead troubled congregants on the path of *teshuvah*. The framework of *teshuvah* offers rabbis a normative moral and ethical

framework, a structured process as well as a theological construct, to help the penitent to atone and ask for forgiveness.

The expansion of choice, autonomy and individualization in modern times, with all its benefits, has left many individuals with a great sense of alienation and a sense of dislocation. Each person feels isolated in his or her own suffering, presenting the rabbi with the opportunity to invite the person into the warmth of the Jewish community.

When a patient seeks psychotherapy he or she determines the objective of therapeutic work . The psychotherapist "is a kind of psychological lamplighter, helping the patient to illuminate his/her conflicts and desires without imposing or advocating any particular moral or behavioral standards." [146] In contrast, atonement takes place in the context of a normative set of principles of Jewish law, which includes as a central tenet, a structured process of *teshuvah* for a transgressor to follow. This external set of principles, values and beliefs that can imbue the individual's life with meaning and purpose. A communally shared and historically grounded set of norms and beliefs provides us with a strong foundation in which to speak the language of obligation and responsibility to the community as a whole, and for each individual member of the community.

As Jews and as God's covenanted partners, Jews are instructed to act like God, *imitato dei*. "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." (Lev. 10:2) As rabbis, we can model compassionate justice for our congregants. We should base

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[146] Friedman & Yehuda , 40.

our work on the premise that morality is an integral part of a person's mental health. Rabbis can act to help congregants harness their guilt and take responsibility both for their transgressions and for changing themselves through the process of *teshuvah.*

Teshuvah provides the penitent with a clear process by which to address the feelings of remorse. With the writing of *Hilchot Teshuvah*, Maimonides created a comprehensive document based on the biblical and rabbinic writings on teshuvah, which provides a structure and a coherent set of norms and values regarding *teshuvah.* It should serve as the field guide for the contemporary rabbi in his or her work with congregants seeking to do the work of *teshuvah.* The four-step *teshuvah* process of recognition, confession, remorse and resolve, provides the rabbi and the penitent with a clear sequential structure by which the penitent can seek resolution and closure.

In virtually all of the modern writings about *teshuvah,* the motivation of the ideal penitent is to repair the estrangement from God that sin causes. It is fair to say that many of our congregants do not come at the outset to their rabbi explicitly seeking closeness to God, rather they come because of a desire to relieve feelings of shame or discomfort about their behavior or character, often expressing feelings of loss of integrity and wholeness.

If the penitent focuses entirely upon human agency, he or she may well take on so much guilt as to become immobilized and unable to act. If, on the other hand, he or she sees all action as foreordained, he or she will fail to take responsibility for

one's actions. Theologically, Judaism's perception of human nature is realistic as well as compassionate. Humankind is born with free will and with both a good and evil inclination. Hence, human beings are always in a struggle with their inclinations and wrongdoing is inherent in human nature. As rabbis, we can help congregants to negotiate the implications of the intertwining of human free will with Divine omniscience and omnipotence. We can remind and reassure our congregants that this struggle is a normative one that exists against a backdrop of a compassionate God. Just as God is willing to forgive the penitent's transgressive behavior until the moment of death, we as rabbis can imitate God by acting compassionate and forgiving.

Inherent in the process of teshuvah is the optimistic assumption that human beings have the capacity to change, that people are capable of "moral regeneration."[147] Yet, we all know from personal experience that behaviors are well entrenched and therefore are difficult to change. Because of this tendency to regress, we assume that we will fail, often repeatedly, to change behavior and character.

Maimonides understands this difficulty of recidivism very well. He warned us, in what can only be described as a psychologically sophisticated manner, that we should guard against certain bad attributes, because the more we repeat them, the more entrenched they become, making the work of *teshuvah* all the more difficult.. Expanding upon this theme, Rav Soloveitchik states that not only is it necessary to

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[147] Neusner, 21.

turn away from wrongdoing, one must not even walk the path that can lead to wrongdoing.[148] But while it is human nature to repeat one's mistakes, Judaism retains the optimistic conviction that human being can change and repent.

Not only can rabbis be informed by the wisdom of biblical and rabbinic texts, they can use them as didactic and therapeutic tools. For example, it is not uncommon for people to have psychosomatic responses to suffering. The rabbi can evoke the biblical example of the Israelites in the time of the Temple, when sins were viewed as a burden, a veritable weight that was put on the back of the scapegoat at Yom Kippur to be carried out to the desert. Through using this particularly Jewish example, the person is reassured that he or she is not alone in experiencing guilt as a burdensome weight. The scapegoat can serve as a powerful metaphor for the journey of *teshuvah a*nd roots the personal experience of the congregant in the history of the Jewish people.

Rabbis can draw upon our texts to contextualize their congregants' personal situations. The *Tanach* provides many stories about models of *teshuvah*. It is the task of the rabbi to move each person on the continuum of *teshuvah.* Pastoral rabbis can use biblical stories to make a "diagnosis." For example when confronted by a congregant who has an" inner-disquiet,"[149] a precursor to remorse rather than true remorse for actions they have committed, the congregant should be thought of as being on an ascending path from Adam's precursor of *teshuvah* to the *teshuvah*

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[148] Peli, 57.
[149] Peli, 148.

gemura of Judah. The rabbi, using Adam as an internal model, can help the congregant to look at his or her behavior against normative standards of behavior to help them to be more conscious of their wrongdoing.

For those penitents who come to us to atone, who are filled with suffering, and self recrimination, Judah remains an accessible yet powerful role model of a person who transgressed, truly repented and was fully forgiven. If the Jewish messiah can come from the loins of this sinner/penitent, whose name became the name of our religion, then there is reason for our congregants to not feel stuck in their self- loathing but rather to have hope and to be optimistic about their ability to recreate themselves and contribute positively in the future. Our biblical narratives help us to recognize that transgression and teshuvah are the natural outcome of our having free will. We can reassure our congregants, that transgressing, atoning and striving to do better, and periodically failing, are natural to being human, *b'nai Adam*, children of Adam, the first sinner.

Teshuvah, very much like the field of psychotherapy, challenges the notion of "you can't undo the past." Both approaches invite us to call upon the past, to bring it into the present and to re-examine and reconstruct it. In psychotherapy, one remembers the past to understand one's current situation and to relieve the person of guilt and suffering. But whereas psychotherapy dwells on the past in order to work through the feelings about prior actions, *teshuvah* utilizes the past as a

creative catalyst for shaping the future.[150] As rabbis we help our congregants to revisit the past not to dwell in it, but in order to reframe it, allowing for better choices for the future.

Teshuvah helps us to reshape our past, and frees us of its deterministic tyranny, and allowing us to move on and create a better future. This process is lifelong, we revisit the past, and understand its meaning in its present day context. For example, if a congregant reflects upon his history as an abusive father, the rabbi can help him to look at his past behavior in order to confess it, ask for forgiveness of his children, express remorse and determine that he will not repeat his behavior. The rabbi can also ensure that the father will take the necessary steps to seek adjunctive psychotherapy to ensure that he won't repeat his abusive behavior, thereby ensuring that the future will not be a continuation of the past.

Each time a congregant turns to the rabbi to do *teshuvah*, the rabbi has the opportunity to help bring s*hlaymut* not only to the psychic, spiritual and moral being of that individual, but to that person's family and community and to draw that person closer to God and to the Jewish community. The Jewish tradition views each person as precious and unique, each created *b'tzelem Elohim*. At the same time, each person is part of an entity known as *Klal Yisrael*, a community that is responsible for each other and for bettering the world. Whereas psychotherapy expresses individual concerns, *teshuvah* is and should be about the individual as part of the fabric of *Klal Yisrael.*

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[150] Kaplan, 239.

One of the greatest challenges we face as rabbis is to help troubled or guilt-ridden congregants get beyond themselves and their isolation to see themselves as tied to a larger whole, be it society or *Klal Yisrael*. Maimonides addresses this issue in one his most powerful statements where he teaches that each person should act in every instance as if the fate of the world rests on his or her every action. When a person acts sinfully it is a blemish on our entire community. Imagine how different our communities would be if this perspective were central to our thinking and functioning.

Optimally, rabbis as *morey-derech* will utilize the theological, historical, psychologically infused, prescriptive process of *teshuvah,* as a powerful framework to help congregants achieve wholeness Thus, rabbis should hear each call for help as an opportunity to teach the wisdom of Judaism and demonstrate the compassionate community of care that is the essence of Judaism.

ADDENDUM: HISTORICAL, STRUCTURAL BACKGROUND OF THE *MISHNAH* TORAH

Maimonides had several motivations for writing the *Mishneh Torah*. He thought that there was an urgent need to present the widely dispersed Jewish community of his time, with a shared set of Jewish practices and halachot. Maimonides claimed that the times he lived in were turbulent and Jewish literacy was diminished, making the study of *Talmud* too difficult for many. Additionally the sheer volume of material was over-whelming. By codifying the halachot he would make this knowledge available and accessible to all.

In the introduction to the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides compares the putatively special circumstances of his time to that of that of Judah HaNasi, the redactor of the *Mishnah*, stating that the turbulence of their respective periods in history necessitated new forms of text. Maimonides claimed that all one would need to study to know how to observe the mitzvoth were the *Torah* and the *Mishneh Torah*. In the introduction to the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides states that his work is a "compendium of the entire Oral Law,"[151] including the *Mishnah,* both the Babylonian and Palestinian *Talmud*, *Sifra, Sifre,Tosefta,* Alfasi's code and the writings of the Geonim. [152] For Maimonides only the

[151] Isadore Twersky *A Maimonides Reader* (New Jersey: Behrman House, 1972) 49
[152] Ibid 49

Talmud was halachically binding and accordingly he somewhat disparaged the decisions made by the Geonim.[153]

Although the *Mishneh Torah* was a distillation of rabbinic sources, he cited none. He viewed the Mishneh Torah as a compendium of all the Oral Law from the time of Moses, such that " a person who first reads the Written Law and then this compilation will know from it the whole of Oral law, without having occasion to consult any other book between." [154]Therefore, his only sources are quotes from biblical text, linking his work to the chain of tradition, and thereby lending gravitas *t*o his writings. Although Maimonides did not include his Jewish textual sources, he went to great lengths to cite a variety of other materials, such as non-Jewish scientific sources, historical information, or religious ethical material that shed light on the rationale for his halachic decisions.[155]

Although Maimonides was not the first to produce a code, several characteristics set his apart from its predecessors: making it truly unique In contrast to the *Talmud*, his code was distinctive in his method of topical classification, which was set forth "categorically and prescriptively".[156] Beyond these distinctions, his code also differed from its predecessors: He created topical rather than prescriptive classifications; he wrote in an accessible literary style, in mishnaic Hebrew, rather than Aramaic, and he included aspects of Jewish law that were no longer practicable such as Temple sacrifice.[157] The *Mishneh Torah*, like the *Mishnah*, included many examples of case law. However,the

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[153] Ibid p.34
[154] Ibid 40
[155] Menachem Elon, *Jewish Law: History, Sources, Principles* Vol 3 (Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1994) 1191
[156] Ibid 1191
[157] Ibid1185-1187.

Mishneh Torah combined the casuistic style, the use of ethical principles to resolve moral problems, with a more normative approach making it easier to derive general principles of law.[158]

The legal scholar Menachem Elon, gives three explanations for Maimonides' decision to retain the casuistic style. First, by including cases that had been reviewed beforehand, he provided an accessible repository of cases as the basis for future decisions. Secondly, he maintained continuity with the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* by maintaining the same literary style. Third, by including individual examples he made the potential use of the law less apodictic, and more flexible and responsive to future, varied circumstances.[159]

Maimonides' approach sparked a great deal of controversy over the centuries. Particularly problematic was the omission of sources, and the failure to explain how he reached his halachic positions. According to Elon, Maimonides chose not to cite multiple opinions because it made it harder for the reader to extract the legal precept, and the code strove to be prescriptive rather than descriptive.[160]

In a letter to a judge, Dayyan Phineas b. Meshullam of Alexandria, Maimonides acknowledges the difficulty entailed by not citing sources. He voices regret that he did not have the chance to write a book of source references to accompany the *Mishneh Torah*.[161]Additionally, Maimonides claims that the reason he chose not to cite the names

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[158] Ibid 1211
[159] Ibid1213,1214
[160] Ibid, 1204
[161] Ibid 1221

of individual Talmudists' derived from his concern about the Karaites' charge that the Oral Law was merely the opinions of individuals, rather than the word of God.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Maimonides work pertains to the nature of his relationship to halachah and Aristotlean philosophy. Scholars in the field debate whether he was primarily guided by Hellenistic philosophical principles or by halachah, as well as whether he separated the two bodies of thought or attempted to synthesize them. Was he a mystic or was he a rationalist? Did Maimonides believe in observing halachot as a steppingstone to studying metaphysics, or as the path to grow close to God? For example, Maimonides faced vociferous criticism for his statement that man would be resurrected in *olam ha ba*, only as a soul, not as a body. (Hilchot *Teshuvah* 8:2) Critics held that bodily resurrection was a core Jewish belief, and that Maimonides concept that only the soul was resurrected bore the influence of Hellenistic thinking. In response to this critique, Maimonides claimed to believe in bodily resurrection.

I find most persuasive those academicians who posited that Maimonides attempted to synthesize philosophy and *halachah* and who thought him to be grounded in rabbinic thought yet influenced by the Neo-Platonic writings of the Arab thinker, Alfarabi. [162] Maimonides viewed philosophy through the lens of Jewish beliefs and *halachot.* His goal was to synthesize the two, to make philosophy coherent with Jewish beliefs, *halachot* synthesized with *taamei hamitzvoth*, and to actually prove that Jewish beliefs were valid and true.

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[162] Lawrence Berman, *Maimonides, the Disciple of Afarabi Maimonides, A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Buijs, Joseph A. (Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1988). 175

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Hebrew Sources

Intro Chapter

A1

תוספתא מסכת סוטה (ליברמן) פרק ד

אין לי אלא מדת פורענות שבמדה שאדם מודד בה מודדין לו מדת הטוב מנין אמרת מרובה מדת הטוב ממדת הפורענות על אחת מחמש מאות במדת פורענות כת' פוקד עון אבות על בנים ועל בני בנים על שלשים ועל רבעים במדת הטוב כת' ועושה חסד לאלפים הוי אומ' מרובה מדת הטוב ממדת פורענות על אחד מחמש מאות

A2

תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא דף פו עמוד א

שאל רבי מתיא בן חרש את רבי אלעזר בן עזריה ברומי: שמעת ארבעה חלוקי כפרה שהיה רבי ישמעאל דורש? אמר: שלשה הן, ותשובה עם כל אחד ואחד. עבר על עשה ושב - אינו זז משם עד שמוחלין לו, שנאמר (ירמיהו ג) שובו בנים שובבים. עבר על לא תעשה ועשה תשובה - תשובה תולה, ויום הכפורים מכפר שנאמר (ויקרא טז) כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם מכל חטאתיכם. עבר על כריתות ומיתות בית דין ועשה תשובה - תשובה ויום הכפורים תולין, ויסורין ממרקין, שנאמר (תהלים פט) ופקדתי בשבט פשעם ובנגעים עונם, אבל מי שיש חילול השם בידו - אין לו כח בתשובה לתלות, ולא ביום הכפורים לכפר, ולא ביסורין למרק. אלא כולן תולין, ומיתה ממרקת, שנאמר (ישעיהו כב) ונגלה באזני ה' צבאות אם יכפר העון הזה לכם עד תמתון.

Maimonides

A3

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק א הלכה ג (ח)

בזמן שאין בית המקדש קיים, ואין לנו מזבח כפרה--אין שם אלא תשובה.

#A4

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ז הלכה ז (ח)

כמה מעולה מעלת התשובה: אמש היה זה מובדל מה' אלוהי ישראל, שנאמר "עוונותיכם, היו מבדילים, ביניכם, לבין אלוהיכם" (ישעיהו נט,ב).

A5

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ג הלכה ד (ח)

לפיכך צריך כל אדם שיראה עצמו כל השנה כולה, כאילו חציו זכאי וחציו חייב; וכן כל העולם, חציו זכאי וחציו חייב: חטא חטא אחד--הרי הכריע עצמו והכריע את כל העולם כולו לכף חובה, וגרם להם השחתה; עשה מצוה אחת--הרי הכריע את עצמו והכריע את כל העולם כולו לכף זכות, וגרם להן תשועה והצלה.

A6

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ב הלכה א (ב)

אפילו עבר כל ימיו, ועשה תשובה ביום מיתתו ומת בתשובתו--כל עוונותיו נמחלין.

A7

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ב הלכה ב (ג)

ומה היא התשובה--הוא שיעזוב החוטא חטאו, ויסירנו ממחשבתו ויגמור בליבו שלא יעשהו עוד, שנאמר "יעזוב רשע דרכו, ואיש אוון מחשבותיו" (ישעיהו נה,ז). וכן יתנחם על שעבר, שנאמר "כי אחרי שובי, ניחמתי, ואחרי היוודעי, ספקתי על ירך" (ירמיהו לא,יח); ויעיד עליו יודע תעלומות שלא ישוב לזה החטא לעולם, שנאמר "ולא נאמר עוד אלוהינו, למעשה ידינו--אשר בך, ירוחם יתום" (הושע יד,ד). וצריך להתוודות בשפתיו, ולומר עניינות אלו שגמר בליבו.

A8

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ד הלכה ה (א-ה)

א עשרים וארבעה דברים מעכבין את התשובה1.

ארבעה מהן עוון גדול; (א) המחטיא את הרבים, (ג) והרואה בנו בתרבות רעה, ואינו ממחה בידו, (ד) והאומר אחטא ואשוב; ובכלל זה האומר אחטא, ויום הכיפורים מכפר.

ב ומהן חמישה דברים הן נועלין דרכי התשובה בפני עושיהן; ואלו הן: (א) הפורש מן הציבור, (ב) והחולק על דברי חכמים, (ג) והמלעיג על המצוות, (ד) והמבזה רבותיו, (ה) והשונא את התוכחות.

ג ומהן חמישה דברים העושה אותן אי אפשר לו שישוב תשובה גמורה, לפי שהן עוונות שבין אדם לחברו, ואינו יודע חברו שחטא לו, כדי שיחזיר לו או ישאל ממנו למחול לו; ואלו הן: (א) המקלל את הרבים, (ב) והחולק עם גנב, (ג) והמוצא אבידה ואינו מכריז עליה עד שיחזירה לבעליה, (ד) והאוכל שוד עניים ויתומים ואלמנות.

ד ומהן חמישה דברים העושה אותן אין חזקתו לשוב מהן, לפי שהן דברים קלים בעיני רוב האדם, ונמצא חוטא והוא ידמה שאין זה חטא; ואלו הן: (א) האוכל מסעודה שאינה מספקת לבעליה, (ב) והמשתמש בעבוטו של עני, (ג) והמסתכל בעריות, (ד) והמתכבד בקלון חברו, (ה) והחושד כשרים.

ה ומהן חמישה דברים העושה אותן יימשך אחריהן תמיד, והן קשים לפרוש מהן; לפיכך צריך אדם להיזהר מהן שמא יידבק בהן, והן כולן דעות רעות עד מאוד; ואלו הן: (א) רכילות. (ב) ולשון הרע. (ג) ובעל חמה. (ד) ובעל מחשבה רעה. (ה) והמתחבר לרשע.

A9

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ב הלכה ד (ה)

ומשנה שמו, כלומר שאני אחר ואיני אותו האיש שעשה אותן המעשים.

A10

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק י הלכה ב (ג)

העובד מאהבה, עוסק בתורה ובמצוות והולך בנתיבות החכמה--לא מפני דבר בעולם, לא מפני יראת הרעה, ולא כדי לירש הטובה: אלא עושה האמת, מפני שהוא אמת; וסוף הטובה לבוא בכלל.

A11

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ו הלכה ה (י)

ועוד שנתן בהם כוח ללמוד ולהבין, שמידה זו בכל אדם, שכל זמן שהוא נמשך בדרכי החכמה והצדק, מתאווה להן ורודף אותן.

A12

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ה הלכה ד (ז-י,יג)

ואל תתמה ותאמר היאך יהיה האדם עושה כל מה שיחפוץ, ויהיו מעשיו מסורין לו, וכי ייעשה בעולם דבר שלא ברשות קונו ובלא חפצו, והכתוב אומר "כול אשר חפץ ה', עשה: בשמיים ובארץ" (תהילים קלה,ו). דע שהכול בחפצו ייעשה, ואף על פי שמעשינו מסורין לנו.

כיצד: כשם שחפץ היוצר להיות האש והרוח עולים למעלה, והמים והארץ יורדים למטה, והגלגל סובב בעיגול, וכן שאר בריות העולם להיות כמנהגן שחפץ בו--ככה חפץ להיות האדם רשותו בידו, וכל מעשיו מסורין לו, ולא יהיה לו לא כופה ולא מושך, אלא הוא מעצמו ובדעתו שנתן לו האל עושה כל שהאדם יכול לעשות.

לפיכך דנין אותו לפי מעשיו: אם עשה טובה, מטיבין לו; ואם עשה רעה, מריעין לו. הוא שהנביא אומר "מידכם, הייתה זאת" (מלאכי א,ט) לכם; "גם המה, בחרו בדרכיהם" (ישעיהו סו,ג). ובעניין זה אמר שלמה "שמח בחור בילדותך . . . ודע, כי על כל אלה יביאך האלוהים במשפט" (קוהלת יא,ט)--כלומר דע שיש בידך כוח לעשות, ועתיד אתה ליתן את הדין.

שמא תאמר והלוא הקדוש ברוך הוא יודע כל מה שיהיה קודם שיהיה: ידע שזה צדיק או רשע, או לא ידע; אם ידע שהוא יהיה צדיק, אי אפשר שלא יהיה צדיק, ואם תאמר שידע שיהיה צדיק ואפשר שיהיה רשע, הרי לא ידע הדבר על בוריו.

(יג) אבל נדע בלא ספק, שמעשה האדם ביד האדם; ואין הקדוש ברוך הוא מושכו, ולא גוזר עליו לא לעשות כך ולא שלא לעשות כך. ולא מפני קבלת הדת בלבד נדע דבר זה, אלא בראיות ברורות מדברי החכמה. ומפני זה נאמר בנבואה שדנין את האדם על כל מעשיו כפי מעשיו, אם טוב ואם רע. וזה העיקר, שכל דברי הנבואה תלויין בו.

A13

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ו הלכה ה (יא)

והלוא כתוב בתורה "ועבדום, ועינו אותם" (בראשית טו,יג), הרי גזר על המצריים לעשות רע; וכתוב "וקם העם הזה וזנה אחרי אלוהי נכר הארץ" (דברים לא,טז), הרי גזר על ישראל לעבוד עבודה זרה. ולמה נפרע מהן: לפי שלא גזר על איש פלוני הידוע, שיהיה הוא הזונה; אלא כל אחד ואחד מאותן הזונים שעבדו עבודה זרה--אילו לא רצה לעבוד, לא היה עובד. ולא הודיעו הבורא, אלא מנהגו של עולם.

Soloveitchik

A14

תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא דף פו עמוד ב

אמר ריש לקיש: גדולה תשובה, שזדונות נעשות לו כשגגות, שנאמר)הושע יד(שובה ישראל עד ה' אלהיך כי כשלת בעונך. הא עון מזיד הוא, וקא קרי ליה מכשול. איני? והאמר ריש לקיש: גדולה תשובה שזדונות נעשות לו כזכיות, שנאמר)יחזקאל לג(ובשוב רשע מרשעתו ועשה משפט וצדקה עליהם יחיה! - לא קשיא; כאן - מאהבה, כאן - מיראה.

A15

משנה מסכת יומא פרק ח משנה ט

אמר רבי עקיבא אשריכם ישראל לפני מי אתם מיטהרין מי מטהר אתכם אביכם שבשמים שנאמר (יחזקאל ל"ו) וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם ואומר (ירמיה י"ד) מקוה ישראל ה' מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים אף הקדוש ברוך הוא מטהר את ישראל:

Psychotherapy

A16

משנה מסכת בבא קמא פרק ח

אף על פי שהוא נותן לו אין נמחל לו עד שיבקש ממנו שנאמר (בראשית כ') ועתה השב אשת האיש כי נביא הוא וגו'.

A17

תוספתא מסכת בבא קמא (ליברמן) פרק ט הלכה יא

החובל בחבירו אע"פ שלא בקש החובל מן הנחבל הנחבל צריך שיבקש עליו רחמים שנא' (בראשית כ) ויתפלל אברהם אל האלהים וכן אתה מוצא בריעי איוב שנא' (איוב מב) ועתה קחו לכם שבעה פרים ושבעה אילים מה הוא אומר (שם) וה' שב את שבות איוב בהתפללו בעד רעהו וגו' ר' יהודה אומר משם ר"ג הרי הוא אומר (דברים יג) ונתן לך רחמים ורחמך והרבך וגו' זה סימן יהא בידך כל זמן שאתה רחמן הרחמן מרחם עליך.

A18

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ב הלכה ט (יא-יג)

אבל עבירות שבין אדם לחברו, כגון חובל חברו או המקלל את חברו או גוזלו וכיוצא בהן--אינו נמחל לו לעולם, עד שייתן לחברו מה שהוא חייב לו, וירצהו.

אף על פי שהחזיר לו ממון שהוא חייב לו, צריך לרצותו ולשאול ממנו שימחול לו; ואפילו לא הקניט את חברו אלא בדברים, צריך לפייסו ולפגוע בו עד שימחול לו.

לא רצה חברו למחול לו--מביא לו שורה של שלושה בני אדם מריעיו, ופוגעין בו ומבקשין ממנו. לא נתרצה להן, מביא לו שנייה ושלישית. לא רצה, מניחו והולך לו; וזה שלא מחל, הוא החוטא. ואם היה רבו--הולך ובא אפילו אלף פעמים, עד שימחול לו.

A19

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם פרק ב הלכה י (יד)

לפי שאסור לאדם שיהיה אכזרי ולא יתפייס, אלא יהיה נוח לרצות וקשה לכעוס, ובשעה שמבקש ממנו החוטא למחול, מוחל בלבב שלם ובנפש חפצה; ואפילו הצר לו הרבה וחטא לו הרבה, לא ייקום וייטור.

Biblical chapter

A20

מדרש תדשא פרק ז'

אמר ר' פנחס בן יאיר: העץ הזה עד שלא אכל ממנו אדם הראשון לא נקרא שמו אלא "עץ" בלבד כשאר כל העצים, אבל משאכל ועבר על גזרתו של הקב"ה, נקרא שמו "עץ הדעת טוב ורע" על שם סופו ...ולמה קרא שמו "הדעת טוב ורע"? שעל ידי אכילתו ידע אדם רעות, שעד שלא עבר על הצווי לא נגזר עמל, ולא יגיעה, ולא קר ולא חם ולא מכאוב, ולא כל דבר רע מזיקו, אבל משעבר על חק גזרתו של מקום, התחילו כל הרעות נוגעות בו ונצערים מעשיו.

A21

ספורנו בראשית פרק ג פסוק א

והנחש. "הוא שטן הוא יצר הרע", רב ההזק עם מעוט היותו נראה. כי אמנם יקרא הדבר בשם איזה דומה לו, כמו שנקרא המלך "אריה", כאמרו "עלה אריה מסבכו" (ירמיהו ד, ז), ויקרא האויבים המזיקים "נחשים צפעונים", אשר אין להם לחש כאמרו "הנני משלח בכם נחשים צפעונים אשר אין להם לחש" וכו' (שם ח, יז). ועל זה הדרך קרא בזה המקום את היצר הרע המחטיא "נחש", בהיותו דומה לנחש, אשר תועלתו במציאות מועט מאד, ונזקו רב עם מעוט הראותו.

A22

פרקי דרבי אליעזר (היגר) - "חורב" פרק יד

אמר אדם לפני הב"ה רבון כל העולמים כשהייתי לבדי לא חטאתי לך אלא שהאשה שהבאת אצלי היא הדיחה אותי מדרכיך, שנ' האשה אשר נתת עמדי וכו'.

A23

ספורנו בראשית פרק ב פסוק כד

והיו לבשר אחד. מכוין בכל הפעולות להשיג השלמות המכוון ביצירת האדם כאלו שניהם נמצא אחד בלבד:

A24

בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פרשת בראשית פרשה כב סימן טז

ויצא קין וגו' מאיכן יצא... ר' חננא בר יצחק אמר יצא שמח כמה דתימר יוצא לקראתך וראך ושמח בלבו (שמות ד יד), פגע בו אדם אמר לו מה נעשה בדינך, אמר לו עשיתי תשובה ופישרתי, התחיל אדם מטפיח על פניו כך היא כח התשובה ולא הייתי יודע, מיד עמד ואמר מזמור שיר ליום השבת טוב להודות לי'' (תהלים צב א ב).

A25

מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) פרשת בראשית סימן ט

כיון שאמר לו הקב"ה אי הבל אחיך א"ל לא ידעתי השומר אחי אנכי אתה הוא שומר כל הבריות ואתה מבקשו מידי? משל למה"ד לגנב שגנב כלים בלילה ולא נתפש, לבקר תפשו השוער, א"ל למה גנבת את הכלים, א"ל אני גנב ולא הנחתי אומנתי אבל אתה אמונתך /אומנתך/ בשער לשמור למה הנחת אומנתך, ועכשיו אתה אומר לי כך, ואף קין כך אמר אני הרגתי אותו בראת בי יצה"ר, אתה שומר את הכל ולי הנחת אותו להרגו אתה הוא שהרגתו שנקראת אנכי שאלו קבלת קרבני כמותו לא הייתי מתקנא בו.

A26

מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) פרשת בראשית סימן ט

צועקים אלי צועקים עלי משל לשנים שעשו מריבה הרג אחד מהן את חבירו היה בהן שליש ולא הפריש ביניהם, על מי הכל משיחין לא על השליש, לכך כתיב צועקים אלי צועקים עלי.

A27

בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת בראשית פרשה כב

אר"ש בן יוחאי קשה הדבר לאומרו, ואי אפשר לפה לפרשו, לב' אתליטין שהיו עומדין ומתגוששים לפני המלך אילו רצה המלך פירשן ולא רצה המלך לפרשן, נתחזק אחד על חבירו והרגו, והיה מצווח ואמר מאן יבעי דיני קדם מלכא כך קול דמי אחיך צועקים אלי מן האדמה, לעלות למעלה לא היתה יכולה שעדיין לא עלתה לשם נשמה, ולמטה לא היתה יכולה לעמוד שעדיין לא נקבר שם אדם והיה דמו מושלך על העצים ועל האבנים.

A28

ספורנו בראשית פרק ד פסוק יג

גדול עוני מנשוא. אחר שראה שהאל יתברך משגיח בפרטים בהחלט, חשב שידע בלי ספק שאינו שב מחטאו בהיותו מתחרט, אלא מפני העונש. וזה אחר ההפצר שהעיד בו האל יתברך לשוב בתשובה והוא מרה, ובזה אמר שלא היתה לחטאו תקות תשובה מכפרת ומגינה על העונש שנענש עתה, כענין שאול בדבר עמלק באמרו לשמואל "חטאתי" (ש"א טו, כד), אחר ההפצר וההערה שהעירהו שמואל לשוב מחטאתו, ושנענש כאמור "וימאסך ממלך" (שם שם, כג):

A29

בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פרשת בראשית פרשה כב סימן יג,יד

ויאמר קין אל י"י גדול עוני מנשוא לעיליונים ותחתונים אתה סובל, לפשעי לא תסבול. גדול עוני משלאבה, אבה על מצוה קלה עבר ונטרד מגן עדן, זו שהיא עבירה חמורה שפיכות דמים על אחת כמה וכמה גדול עוני.

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בראשית רבה (תיאודור-אלבק) פרשת ויגש פרשה צג

אמר לו יוסף, יהודה מפני מה אתה דברן, והלא יש באחיך שגדולים ממך, אמ' לו אף על פי כן כולן חוץ לזיקה הן עומדין, אבל אני מעי קמתין עלי בחבל, אמ' לו מפני מה, אמר לו שהייתי לו ערב, אמ' לו במה הייתה לו ערב, אם כסף אני נותן לך, אם זהב אני נותן לך, אמ' לו לא בכסף ולא בזהב, אלא כך אמרתי לו אהא בנידוי בעולם הבא שנקרא ימים שנ' אם לא הביאתיו אליך והצגתיו לפניך וחטאתי לך כל הימים (בראשית מג ט),

Hebrew Bibliography; Primary sources

בראשית רבה מהדורת תיאודור - אלבק, ברלין תרס"ג, תרע"ב, תרפ"ט

הלכות תשובה לרמב"ם, מהדורת ירושלים תשל"ד, ד"צ ורשא תרמ"א

מדרש תנחומא מהדורת ורשא, ירושלים תשי"ח, ד"צ ורשא תרל"ה

משנה מסכת יומא, משנה מסכת בבא קמא

פירוש ספורנו, בני ברק תשס"ב

פרקי דרבי אליעזר (היגר) , "חורב" פרק יד

תוספתא, מסכתות סוטה ובבא קמא, מהדורת ליברמן, ניו יורק תשט"ו - תשמ"ח

תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא, על פי דפוס שטיינזלץ, המבוסס על דפוס וילנא