# A Tentative Source: Rav Kook’s Orot Hateshuva Chapter 1

Rav Kook begins the first chapter of his *Orot Hateshuva* as follows:

We find three categories of repentance: 1) natural repentance 2) faithful repentance 3) intellectual repentance.

את התשובה אנו מוצאים בשלש מערכות: א) תשובה טבעית, ב) תשובה אמונית, ג) תשובה שכלית

He defines natural repentance:

(תשובה טבעית) הגופנית סובבת את כל העבירות נגד חוקי הטבע, המוסר והתורה, המקושרים עם חוקי הטבע. שסוף כל הנהגה רעה הוא להביא מחלות ומכאובים . . . ואחרי הבירור שמתברר אצלו הדבר, שהוא בעצמו בהנהגתו הרעה אשם הוא בכל אותו דלדול החיים שבא לו, הרי הוא שם לב לתקן את המצב

The natural physical repentance revolves around all sins against the laws of nature ethics and Torah that are connected to the laws of nature. The result of all bad behavior is illness and pain . . . but after one recognizes clearly that he himself and his own harmful behavior is responsible for the weakness he feels, he turns his attention to rectifying the problem.

Rav Kook is describing someone who does not live hygienically. He calls a sin against nature. In terms of ethics, he may have in mind the חסיד שוטה, one who takes his devoutness to foolish extremes (Sotah 20a). In terms of Torah, he may be thinking of the one who volunteers to fast when he is unable to handle the discomfort of fasting (Taanit 11b דלא מצי לצעורי נפשיה). Each of these individuals is unhealthy and must search for a cure. That process is natural, physical repentance.

Rav Kook also speaks about a natural spiritual, repentance ––pangs of remorse, which are natural for an upright person, will motivate the sinner to perform teshuva.

R. Shneur Zalman of Liady, in his collection of sermons known as *Likkutei Torah*, also recognizes three types of repentance. The sermon is formally based on Ps. 34,15.

סור מרע, ועשה טוב, בקש שלום ורדפהו

Turn away from evil and do good, look for peace and run after it.

The types of repentance correspond to the text of our blessings

אתה ד' אלוקינו

The first level of repentance relates to the Divine name *Elokim* (In Hassidic thought, repentance (teshuva) is taken literally as ‘returning to G-d’, not only as repentance from sin.) The mystics of the 16th century connected the name *Elokim* to nature.

אלוקים בגימטריא הטבע

(The spelling of) Elokim is numerically equivalent to the spelling of the word for nature.

The sermon relates *Elokim* to *memale* *kolamin*, or the filling all worlds, the immanence of G-d.

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R. Kook describes the second level of repentance as follows:

אחרי התשובה הטבעית באה האמונית, היא החיה בעולם ממקור המסורת והדת

After the natural repentance comes a repentance based on faith. It subsists in the world from a source of tradition and religion.

R. Shneur Zalmen of Liady describes the second type of repentance as a return to *shem* *Havayah,* the Tetragrammaton. This name signifies the transcendence of G-d, the name associated with the highest degree of revelation, the name of G-d that was revealed at Sinai.

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Rav Kook’s third level:

התשובההשכלית היא . . . הכרה ברורה, הבאה מהשקפת העולם והחיים השלמה . . . היא מלאה כבר אור אין קץ

The intellectual repentance . . . is a clear recognition that comes from an encompassing world and life view. . . . It is a level filled with infinite light.

R. Shneur Zalman of Liady describes the third level of repentance in a similar way. He speaks of return through Torah study to the level of the *Or En Sof*, the infinite self-revelation of G-d. It is a return to אתה to Thou.

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In summary, we have seen that R. Shneur Zalmen discusses three types of teshuva, (although the sources only speak about two types: תשובה מיראה תשובה מאהבה, Yoma 86b). These three teshuva forms are themselves different steps of an ongoing progression. The most obvious teshuva is to “turn away from evil”, to connect to the Divine name *Elokim*. A subsequent higher degree of teshuva is a return to the Divine name *Hashem*. The most intense teshuva is to return to the *Or En Sof*, through the study of Torah in an exalted selfless way.

This suggests to me that the first chapter of Rav Kook’s *Orot Hateshuva* was inspired or was influenced by R. Shneur Zalman’s analysis. The progression that Rav Kook writes about also involves three steps and the names of the steps are parallel to the names of the steps in R. Shneur Zalman’s analysis. It’s almost as if R. Kook is consciously developing the thought of R. Shneur Zalman. He in a new direction; drawing out from it a message that suits his own approach and audience.

On the other hand, it’s possible that R. Kook was not influenced by the *Likutei* *Torah*. Rather he arrived at a similar understanding independently. (Maybe both R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi and R. Kook based their understanding on the same earlier source, which I’m unaware of.)

It is however known that R. Kook did study *Likkutei Torah*. This is documented in a book called *Mazkir* *HaRav* by R. Shimon Glicenstein (published in 1973, with an introduction by R. Tzvi Yehuda Kook). R. Glicenstein was Rav Kook’s personal secretary during the years of the first world, when Rav Kook served as a Rabbi in London.

On page yod, R. Glicenstein writes:

One time on the eve of the holiday of Shavuot, I entered the Rav’s room and I found him running back and forth like a young man. He was holding the Likutei Torah (the section on the Song of Songs) of the Alter Rebbe (the Rav of Liadi) in his hand. With sublime ecstasy and great emotion, he repeated a number of times: “Look, obvious Divine Inspiration springs out of each and every line of these Hassidic essays and sermons”.

Orot hateshuva 1924 <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/31307>

This recognition reaches its greatness after the natural and religious repentances leave the mark of their influence on it

, אשר עלתה למעלתה אחרי אשר התפקיד הטבעי והאמוני כבר רשמו בה יפה את רשומיה Thus, both R. Kook and R. Shenur Zalman of Liady understand that the very first level of repentance as a repentance connected to nature.