# A Source for Rav Kook’s Orot Hateshuva Chapters 1 - 3

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Rav Kook begins the first chapter of his *Orot Hateshuva* [1] 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. All misdeeds lead to illness and pain . . . but after the clarification, when he clearly recognizes that he alone through his own harmful behavior is responsible for the sickness he feels, he turns his attention toward rectifying the problem.

Rav Kook is describing a repentance that stems from a feeling of physical weakness or illness. He also includes repentance of sins against natural ethics and natural aspects of the Torah. A sin of ethics might be similar to the חסיד שוטה, who takes his devoutness to foolish extremes (Sotah 20a). A sin in Torah might be one who fasts although he is unable to handle fasting (Taanit 11b דלא מצי לצעורי נפשיה) [2].

R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, in his collection of sermons *Likutei Torah* [3], also recognizes three types of repentance. Homiletically, he finds the three types in Ps. 34, 15.

סור מרע, ועשה טוב, בקש שלום ורדפהו.

He also relates the types to three names of G-d that appear in the text of the *berachos* that we say:

ברוך אתה ד' אלוקינו

According to R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first level of repentance relates to the Divine name *Elokim* (In Hassidic thought, repentance (teshuva or return) 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 word *Elokim* is numerically equivalent to the word for nature (*hateva*). [4]

In the sermon, *Elokim* is also related to ממלא כל עלמין, the immanence of G-d, which may have something to do with the laws of nature.

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 Zelman of Liadi describes the second type of repentance as a return to the Divine name *Hashem,* 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 and that is associated with the giving of the Torah.

Rav Kook’s third level of repentance:

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 Liadi describes the third level of as a 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.

In summary, R. Shneur Zalman discusses three types of teshuva, (although the sources only speak about two types: תשובה מיראה , תשובה מאהבהYoma 86b). These three teshuva categories form a progression. Rav Kook also speaks of a threefold progression: a return based on nature, a return based on faith, and a return based on intellect. [5]

R. Kook did study *Likutei Torah*. This is documented in a book called *Mazkir* *HaRav* by R. Shimon Glicenstein (published in 1973) [6]. R. Glicenstein was Rav Kook’s personal secretary during the years of the First World War, when Rav Kook served as a Rabbi in London.

On page 10, 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 *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, open Divine Inspiration springs out of each and every line of these Hassidic essays and exegeses”.

מכל שורה ושורה שבמאמרי ודרושי חסידות אלה מבצבץ רוח הקדש גלוי'

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The second chapter of *Orot Hatshuva* is titled Sudden Repentance and Gradual Repentance. The chapter consists of three short paragraphs: the first describes the sudden teshuva as a sort of spiritual flare that spontaneously shines its light on the soul. The second paragraph explains gradual teshuva is terms of a constant effort to plod forward and improve oneself without the benefit of spiritual inspiration.

These ideas also find a parallel in the *Likutei Torah* [7]. R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi discusses two levels of Divine service (not two levels of repentance). In one a spontaneous spiritual arousal comes from above (itaruta de le-eyla) initiated by G-d as a Divine kindness, without any preparation on man’s part. In the other (itaruta de le-tata) man serves G-d with great exertion and effort, taming and refining his own animal nature, without the benefit of any Divine encouragement.

Rav Kook’s third paragraph is difficult to understand. Rav Kook begins by describing again the sudden repentance:

התשובה העליונה  באה מהברקה של הטוב הכללי של הטוב האלהי השורה בעולמות כולם

The sublime teshuva is a result of a flash of the general good of the G-dly good, which permeates all worlds.

The paragraph then continues on a seemingly different track.

והיושר והטוב שבנו הלא הוא בא מהתאמתנו אל הכל, ואיך אפשר להיות קרוע מן הכל, פרור משונה, מופרד כאבק דק שכלא חשב. ומתוך הכרה זו, שהיא הכרה אלהית באמת, באה תשובה מאהבה בחיי הפרט ובחיי הכלל

The rightness and goodness within us, does it not come from our symmetry with the whole. How can we be torn from the whole, like an odd crumb, like insignificant specs of dust?

From this recognition, which is truthfully a G-dly recognition, comes repentance from love in both the life of the individual and the life of the society.

I have a feeling that this paragraph is also related to something in *Likutei Torah.* R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi (in the sermon just mentioned) relates that people complain to him because they feel a spirit of holiness that arouses them to emotional prayer for a only a short duration of time (sometimes for a few weeks). Afterwards the inspiration ceases completely and it’s as if it never existed. He responds, that they should take advantage of those periods of inspiration when they occur, not just to enjoy the pleasure of prayer, but also to change their behavior and character for the better. The state of inspiration will then return.

I think Rav Kook, in his own way is dealing with the same issue. Obviously, the goal is the sudden, inspired teshuvah, but how do we get there? How do we take the exalted periods of awareness and inspiration and regulate them, so that they are more deliberate, intentional and continuous. I can’t say I understand the answer, but I think Rav Kook is saying that if we recognize that we are part of the “whole” and not separate then we will get there.

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In the third chapter, Rav Kook, distinguishes between a detailed teshuva relating to specific individual sins and a broad general teshuva related to no sin in particular. He writes (in the second paragraph):

וישנה עוד הרגשת תשובה סתמית כללית. אין חטא או חטאים של עבר עולים על לבו, אבל ככלל הוא מרגיש בקרבו שהוא מדוכא מאד, שהוא מלא עון, שאין אור ד' מאיר עליו, אין רוח נדיבה בקרבו, לבו אטום

There is another repentance emotion, which is broad and general. The person is not conscious of any past sin or sins, but overall he feels crushed. He feels that he’s full of sin. The G-dly light doesn’t enlighten him, he is not awake; his heart is shut tight.

The concept of a teshuva that is independent of sin is also found in *Likutei Torah*:

התשובה אינה דוקא במי שיש בידו עבירות ח"ו אלא אפילו בכל אדם, כי תשובה הוא להשיב את נפשו שירדה מטה מטה ונתלבשה בדברים גשמיים אל מקורה ושרשה

Repentance isn’t only for those who have sinned (may it not happen), but it’s for everyone. Teshuva is the return of the soul to its source and root, because the soul has descended terribly low, and focuses itself on materialistic goals. [8]

R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi also discusses the same symptoms as Rav Kook.

בזמן הבית הי' הקב"ה עמנו פנים אל פנים בלי שום מסך מבדיל . . .

משא"כ עכשיו בגלות מחיצה של ברזל מפסקת ונק' חולת אהבה שנחלשו חושי אהבה ואומר על מר מתוק

When the temple stood, when the Holy One blessed is He was with us face to face without any concealment . . . However now in exile there’s an iron partition that separates us. We are lovesick, meaning our love is weak. We don’t distinguish bitter from sweet.

כעת בגלות מחמת כי הלב מטומטמת אין המח שליט עלי' כ"כ

כי עבירה מטמטמת לבו שלאדם ונקרא לב האבן

Now in exile because the heart is shut down, the mind hardly can arouse it. Sin has shut down the heart and it’s called a heart of stone. [9]

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The organization of the first three chapters of *Orot Hateshuva,* presents another sort of problem: How are the types of teshuva in the three chapters related? Is the intellectual teshuva of chapter one different from the sudden teshuva of chapter two and different from the general teshuva of chapter three?

I suggest that the arrangement of the three chapters follows the categories of עולם שנה ונפש, (which are found in Sefer Yetzirah). The first chapter examines natural return, faithful and intellectual return. These are connected to נפש – one’s personality and understanding. The second chapter deals with repentance and its relationship to time (שנה). Repentance is either sudden or gradual. The third chapter speaks about a return motivated by a specific sin or motivated by a general malaise. This can possibly be associated with space/location (עולם); the world (or the specific sin) is located somewhere outside of the person and motivates the person to return. Explanations based on the three dimensions of עולם שנה ונפש occur in a number of places in *Likutei Torah.* [10]

[1] <https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/אורות_התשובה_א>

<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/31307>

[2] I saw these two examples in Rav Kook’s Ein AY”H,

<https://he.wikisource.org/wiki/עין_איה_על_ברכות_ט_רי>

In the following paragraph, Rav Kook speaks about a natural spiritual, repentance ––pangs of remorse (if the sinner is an otherwise upright individual) that motivate the sinner to perform teshuva.

[3] <http://chabadlibrary.org/books/default.aspx?furl=/adhaz/lkutey/21/73a> Likutei Torah Parshat Balak 73a. The sermon begins with the words מה טובו. There are (shorter) versions of the sermon published in other collections.

[4] Quoted also in the second part of Tanya, (*Shaar Hayichud Vhaemunah*) beginning of chapter 6. The statement is usually attributed to R. Moshe Cordovero, (*Pardes* *Rimonim*)

[5] Possibly both R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi and R. Kook relied on an earlier source that I’m unaware of.

Maybe R. Kook and R. Shneur Zalman arrived at a similar understanding independently.

[6] <https://www.otzar.org/wotzar/book.aspx?150570> R. Tzvi Yehudah Kook wrote the introduction to the book. From the introduction, it looks like R. Glicenstein had given R. Tzvi Yehudah his essays and notes so that they could be published.

[7] Parshat Vayikra page 2b, on the words אדם כי יקריב מכם. <http://chabadlibrary.org/books/default.aspx?furl=/adhaz/lkutey/4/2b>

[8] Shabbat Shuva page 66c and Balak page 75b.

[9] Parshat Re’eh page 26a, Shir ha Shirim page 36a

[10] Parshat Hukat page 64d. Obviously, I don’t think that Rav Kook’s use of olam, shana, nefesh, (if he’s in fact using that breakdown) comes specifically from *Likutei Torah.*