Teshuva - Bob Woog

Our Musaf service of Rosh Hashanah contains the theme of Teshuva

Teshuva is most often translated as "repentance", but it literally means "return" It means turning away from wrong choices and returning to God, your community, and your highest moral self.

T*eshuvah* (is found in the pivotal prayer Unetaneh Tokef.

On Rosh Hashanah will it be inscribed and on Yom Kippur will it be sealed – how many will pass from the earth and how many will be created; who will live and who will die;. Who will rest and who will wander, who will enjoy tranquility and who will be distressed, who will be impoverished and who will be enriched, who will be degraded and who will be exalted.[f] But **'teshuvah, Repentance, tefillah**, **Prayer and tzedakah Charity** avert the severe Decree."

Jewish tradition teaches that people are born with pure souls. Teshuva is the act of finding your way back to that original purity.

According to thinkers like Maimonides, true teshuva involves specific steps:

- **Regret:** Feeling genuine remorse for the mistake.
- **Confession:** Saying out loud what you did wrong.
- **Resolution:** Making a firm promise not to repeat the action when faced with the same temptation.
- **Atonement:** Making things right with anyone you hurt.

Teshuvah means to return. But return where? The Sages have taught over the millennia that the essence of each person is his or her soul. According to Chassidic philosophy, the soul is literally "a part of G-d on high"[2] and can never truly be blemished by sin. Therefore, when we sin, we are merely losing our way and forgetting who we really are—like being overtaken by "a temporary state of insanity."

As Maimonides writes,[4] every Jew, at their deepest level, ultimately "wants to fulfill all of G-d's instructions and distance themselves from any sin.

According to Jewish thought, then, the journey of *teshuvah* is not about "turning over a new leaf" or being "born again"; rather, it is simply finding our way back to the land of our soul.

Judaism teaches us that we are not our sins or our mistakes. We are all inherently good, holy, righteous souls that sometimes lose our way but can always make the choice to reconnect.
Teshuvah is this choice

There are two major types of transgressions in Judaism: - transgressions against God and transgressions against other people. One of the main principles of *teshuvah* is stated in the Mishnah: "For transgressions between a person and God, Yom Kippur atones; however, for transgressions between a person and another, Yom Kippur does not atone until one appeases the other person." In other words, the party who was wronged must grant forgiveness for the wrongdoing.

For me this is the most difficult part of the High Holidays so I don't want to miss this opportunity to ask each of you, if I have offended you in any way this past year, please forgive me as I forgive you. **'in the spirit of teshuvah.**

Now with your indulgence, there is another return that I'd like to share my struggle with over the years.
I have often thought "Where do I belong" Should I return to somewhere else". as World events have influenced where I am. My mother came from Lithuania, a small Baltic country that was swallowed up by Germany in WWI and later by Russia after WWII and only regained its independence in 1990. Had it not been for WWI and the Russian revolution, I might be a Lithuanian.
My father came from Germany, escaping from the Nazis, had it not been for the Nazis and WWII, I might be a German,
For over three years in the 70's I lived in Tehran, Iran, had it not been for the Islamic revolution, I might still be there.

Over the years this has haunted me, in 1970, I bought a Eurail pass and went to Europe including the city that my grandfather was born, looking for my roots, but unsuccessful as I don't speak German. In 2014, my brother and I were invited to

Lithuania to speak at the unveiling of a statue honoring my great grandfather, the leading industrialist of that nation of all time.
For 2020 we planned to return to hold my grandson Joshua's Bar Mitzvah in the house my mother was born in, but Covid caused us to cancel. Finally I resolved that on my 80th birthday, which was this last June, I would return to Germany and Lithuania, this time, not alone, but with my entire family.
I could not have imagined what we learned, what mysteries were solved, what we saw, the incredible reception we received, and the emotions that we all experienced.

So this is an invitation to all of you to join our family in a brunch and learn that Rich will organize to share in the heritage of our ancestors and hopefully to inspire others to do the same, if not for themselves, but for their children and grandchildren.

May all of our descendants rest in peace, and to all of you, may your teshuva be accompanied by an easy fast.

Le Shana Tovah