

Teshuvah (תשובה) Facts

- *Teshuvah* is commonly mistranslated as “repentance.” *Teshuvah* actually means “return,” that is, returning back to the path of becoming a better person.
- The Hebrew root for *teshuvah* (תשובה) is *shoov* (שוב) and means: again, return, repeat.
- The ten days between Rosh Hashanah (September 21) and Yom Kippur (September 30) are called the Ten Days of Repentance. During this time, we tell family and friends we are sorry for anything we have done to upset them during the past year. This should be done in person and not over email or texts.
- Related to *teshuvah* is another phrase, *cheshbon hanefesh*, meaning “an accounting of the soul.” In order to do real *teshuvah*, we must first start with an exploration of whom we are and who we want to be.
- Maimonides, also known as Rambam, one of the greatest Jewish thinkers of all time from the 12th/13th centuries, wrote a step-by-step process for *teshuvah*. Even though it was written hundreds of years ago, it still applies today:
 1. Stop. Stop whatever destructive action or behavior you are engaged in. This can be losing your temper, not sharing, not treating someone in a kind way, etc.
 2. Regret. You should feel upset or uneasy about your error. It’s wrong to treat others in an unkind way. You should feel sorry for the harm you have caused.
 3. Verbalize. It’s important to say out loud what you have done wrong. It doesn’t have to be in Hebrew or even done at synagogue; saying it aloud in your bedroom at home works too. After you practice saying it aloud, if you hurt another person, you need to ask that person for forgiveness and tell them you are sorry.
 4. Make a plan. How do you know you won’t make the same mistake again? Write down a plan of action. Real *teshuvah* happens when you are in the same situation and act in a different way.