

Is Teshuvah Possible in the Internet Age?

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Text 1: Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 25a

There was a butcher who sold *treif* (non-kosher) meat. Rav Nachman disqualified him [from serving as a witness] and fired him. The butcher went and grew out his hair and his nails. Rav Nachman considered reinstating him. Rava said to him, “Perhaps he is putting on an act?” Then how can he make it right? Let him act in accord with Rav Iddi bar Avin, who said: One who is suspected of dealing in *treif* meat – there is no way he can make it right until he goes to a place where no one knows him and returns a valuable lost object or discloses that something of value to him is *treif*.

Text 2: Mishnah Yoma 8:9

One who says: I will sin and repent, sin and repent – he will not have the opportunity to repent. One who says: I will sin, and Yom Kippur will secure atonement – Yom Kippur will not secure atonement.

Text 3: Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Teshuvah 1:1

When a person transgresses any commandment in the Torah, positive or negative, intentionally or accidentally – when the person repents and moves away from the sin, they must confess... How does one confess? One says: O God, I have sinned, committed iniquity, and stumbled before you. I did such-and-such and now I regret and am ashamed of my behavior, and I will never do it again – this is the essence of teshuvah.

Text 4: Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metzia 58b

Mishnah: Just as there is *ona'ah* (oppression) in commerce, so too there is *ona'ah* in speech. A person should not ask, "How much does this cost," if they do not wish to buy it. If a person is a *ba'al teshuvah* (a penitent), no one should say to them, "Remember your past deeds." If a person is the descendant of converts, no one should say to them, "Remember the deeds of your ancestors..."

Gemara: How so? If a person is a *ba'al teshuvah*, no one should say to them, "Remember your past deeds." If a person is the descendant of converts, no one should say to them, "Remember the deeds of your ancestors." If a convert comes to study Torah, no one should say to them, "Shall the mouth that ate carrion and non-kosher food, creepy crawlies and critters, now come to study Torah that emanated from the mouth of God?"