

ABSTRACT

THE CONCEPT OF REPENTANCE IN THE ZOHAR

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In its discussions of *teshuva*, the 'Book of Zohar' displays a variety of perspectives and approaches unprecedented in both esoteric and exoteric Jewish writing. Providing more than mere mythic developments of previous *teshuva*-related material, these discussions also interweave celestial and human *teshuva* in multiple manners. The conceptual liberty with regard to *teshuva* emerges in the 'Zohar' against the backdrop of *tikkun*, a novel zoharic concept offering an alternative mode of overcoming sin to that of rabbinic and medieval *teshuva*. *Tikkun* replaced the traditional understandings of *teshuva* as the individual's process of abandoning sin, thereby leaving the concept of *teshuva* open to new semantic valences.

Based on the aforementioned framework, the present article divides zoharic discussions of *teshuva* into three categories: a) a set of mythical interpretations to *teshuva* as a human process of overcoming sin; b) an expansion and development of the sefiratic meaning of *teshuva* as *binah*; c) the notion of *teshuva* as a hypostatic entity, independent of both Man, God and Torah. When combined, all three categories inform a general tendency to reinforce theurgical man-God interdependence. As such, human *teshuva* ascends and receives significant representation at the top of the celestial structure, as well as a decisive role in the inter-sefiratic dynamic. The esoteric ontology framing *Teshuva* as an independent hypostasis further reinforces its theurgic weight.