



Yeshiva University
THE ZAHAVA AND MOSHAEL STRAUS CENTER
FOR TORAH AND WESTERN THOUGHT

S. Carmy

YESHIVA COLLEGE
REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

Fall 2022

The Jewish components to the course include literary and diachronic elements that should affect the construction of Jewish theology in general, and repentance specifically. Much of our time will be devoted to readings major Jewish thinkers of the medieval and modern periods. Note that our work involves studying a variety of Jewish sources, from philosophy and *musar* to halakha. We will often focus on how later thinkers used earlier sources: e.g. R. Soloveitchik and Rambam; R. Hutner and Maharal and R. Yona; everyone based on Tanakh and Hazal.

Non-Jewish philosophy will also include a variety of source and methods: Classic works, 20th century Continental philosophy and contemporary analytic philosophy, including political philosophy, plus religious writers and both Christian and irreligious creative writers. For the most part, the emphasis here will be on repentance and forgiveness between human beings, where Jewish (and classic Christian authors) focus on man and G-d. Some of these writers, like Kant, Nietzsche, Scheler, had direct impact on Jewish thought; others did not. Of course, secular approaches have strongly affected modern Jewish mentalities at a popular and rabbinic level, not least when those influenced are unaware they are being influenced.

The Jewish part of the course will advance roughly in chronological order. The non-Jewish readings will be interspersed through the term. We will attempt to discover, where pertinent, how Torah resources tacitly respond, in effect, to contemporary insights and attitudes.

Tentative order of this material early in semester: Bittner on regret [=assignment #1], Arnold, Arendt [=assignment #2], Butler, Dillon, "Self-Forgiveness and Self-Respect" (*Ethics* 112, 523-83), Butler, Kant (together with Quinn, "Christian Atonement and Kantian Justification")<https://philpapers.org/rec/QUICAA-2>

Most Torah books are **available** in Bet Midrash and online; articles accessible via YULIS e-journals). I intend to distribute Xeroxes of short passages for class analysis. When possible e-versions will be noted on syllabus. Secondary sources will be mentioned and/or assigned as needed. The work we do together in class is probably more important in this course than in a regular lecture course.

Writing: Several short/medium assignments. Please submit promptly!

Available: M;W;T;Th before 6:30 5th Floor Library and other haunts. Feel free to reach me by phone **1-718-252-0496 (best time--10-12 P.M.)** to discuss course material or any other constructive matters. Address: 915 E. 17 St. Brooklyn NY 11230. E-mail: carmy@yu.edu As usual, the goal of our working together is our growth as thinking religious individuals.

Tentative plan

Gary Anderson, *Sin* 3-42 (available online via Pollack catalogue). Maharal, נתיב התשובה (בתוך נתיבות, ע'ולם ב); chapters 1 and 3.

Exodus 34; Isaiah 1; Jeremiah 4; Psalm 51.

Saadia, מאמר ה', אמונות ודעות,

R. Bahye, עשר התשובה, צובות הלבבות,



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Kolnai, "The Standard Forms of Aversion: Fear, Disgust and Hatred" <https://academic.oup.com/mind/article-abstract/107/427/581/990527?redirectedFrom=fulltext> i

David Konstan, *Before Forgiveness* (2010)

Levinas, "Toward the Other" (in *Nine Talmudic Readings*)

Francois Mauriac, *Viper's Tangle*

Ian McEwan, *Atonement*

Jeffrie Murphy, *Punishment and the Moral Emotions*

" " and Jean Hampton, *Forgiveness and Mercy*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals* (~1885)

Martha Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness* (2016)

Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*

[<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.31158006053747&view=1up&seq=48>], Lectures 5 and 6 ("Time and Guilt" 217-267; "Atonement" 271-323)

Max Scheler, "On Repentance" (in *On the Eternal in Man*)

Seneca, *On Anger and On Clemency*

Richard Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement*

Eleonore Stump, *Atonement*

Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity*



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Assignment #1:

Read: R. Bittner, "Is It Reasonable to Regret Things One Did?" (*Journal of Philosophy* 89.5)-- online

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2027168>.

You should be clear about the positions of Spinoza and Bernard Williams as put by Bittner and the various arguments he presents for their positions. Your task is to assess those arguments from a logical and intuitive perspective. You may also examine them from a religious point of view.

By the way, in discussing Spinoza, Bittner says that it makes no difference if we speak of "regret," as he does, or "repentance," as Spinoza does. Is he right?

Due: Wednesday, September 7.

Length: 1000 words would not be excessive. It's more important to think carefully and as precisely as you can. Please submit by one copy by e-mail.