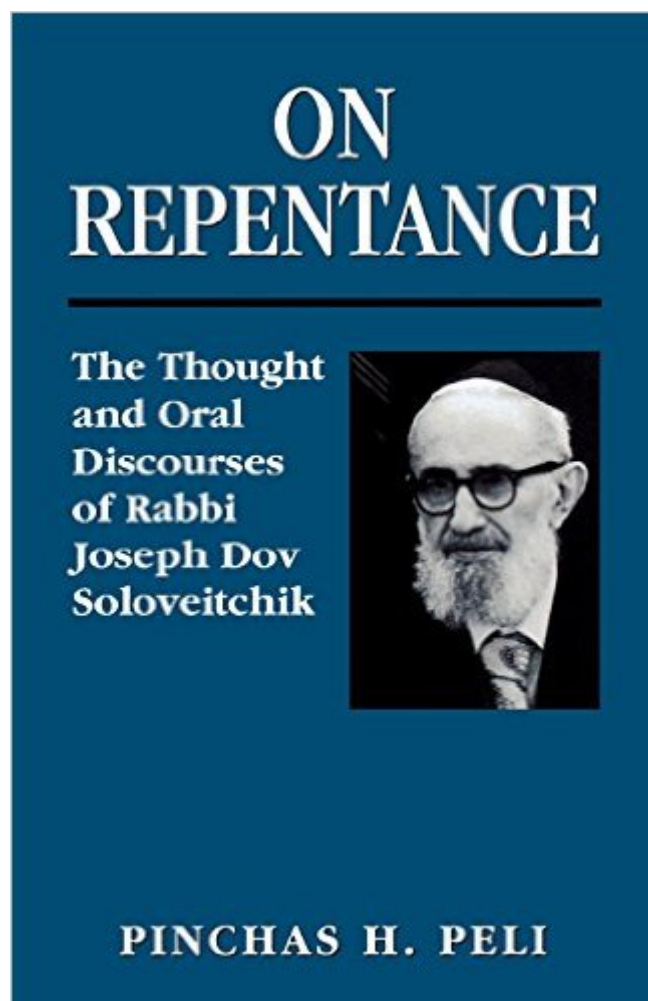


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# On Repentance: The Thought And Oral Discourses Of Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik



## Synopsis

For five decades prior to his death in 1993, Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik was the unchallenged leader of modern Orthodox Judaism in the United States. His understanding of both traditional Judaism and secular philosophy shaped two generations of rabbinic students at Yeshiva University, and charted a new course for American Orthodox Jews. In *On Repentance*, noted scholar Pinchas Peli has gathered the major points of Rabbi Soloveitchik's teachings on teshuvah (repentance), based on the annual series of lectures on the theme of teshuvah, presented on the anniversary of his father's death. For many Jews, these lectures were the major academic and intellectual event of the year. Outside of his followers however, few were able to experience the genius of Rabbi Soloveitchik. He gave his lectures in Yiddish, and generally refused to publish. Now readers can experience the brilliant thinking of this great teacher and sage.

## Book Information

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Rabbi Soloveitchik's views on repentance are interesting. But it should be understood that these views, as much of his writings, are not factual. They are sermonic, flavored by mysticism. They are designed to teach the rabbi's view of proper behavior which is the total surrender to God. Repentance, teshuva in Hebrew, is a practical endeavor. Repentance doesn't magically absolve people of wrongs they committed. It's not abracadabra. Jewish repentance practices remind people to take practical measures to correct their mistakes. Maimonides put it this way: teshuva is when a person decides to abandon his or her past misdeeds, resolves not to do them

again, thinks how to correct them, and develops habits to assure they are not repeated. Neither the term teshuva nor the concept of repentance as we know it today appear in the Torah. The ancients, Israelites and non-Israelites, believed that what one said, especially vows, or what one did could not be erased. When an egg is broken, its shards cannot be reassembled. Misdeeds, they thought, are remedied only by punishment. Scholars suppose that the current idea that people can nullify misdeeds by doing teshuva developed in three stages. It began around 722 BCE, centuries after King Solomon's death when his kingdom split in two with Israel in the north and Judea in the south. In that year, the Assyrians conquered Israel and exiled most Israelites from their land. The Judeans who saw the cyclopean catastrophe were convinced that the disaster occurred because of the misdeeds of the northern tribes, especially that many abandoned God and worshiped idols. They knew that they did the same and searched for a way to save themselves, to nullify their wrongs without punishment.

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