New Year
New You

A *Teshuvah* Reader:

An Application of the Radical, Transformative Choose Again Six-Step Process

Anne Andrew PhD

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At High Holyday services at synagogues around the world, the central prayer, which we fervently recite as one, is the "*Al Heyt shechatanu lefaneicha*..." "For the sins we have committed…". By repeating these words out loud as part of the congregation we fulfill, or so we think, our obligation of doing *teshuvah* – of repenting for our misdeeds. However, this 'lip service' is a poor substitute for the real inner work that we must do in order to achieve true *teshuvah* – a real return to our innocence that can have a massively helpful role to play in the happiness each of us feels on a daily basis.

This short booklet will lead you to understand the significance and power of *teshuvah*, and it will provide you a step-by-step method to help to achieve it and to change your life in ways you never thought possible.

The Choose Again Six-Step Process was devised by Diederik Wolsak - founder of Choose Again. He established El Cielo, an attitudinal healing centre in Costa Rica that is highly successful in dealing with depression, anxiety, and relationships. My family has received multiple benefits from using this process regularly and I have discovered that the Choose Again Six-Step Process is a useful tool in achieving the lasting change that *teshuvah* requires of us. I present it as such in this booklet.

The photographs between selections are there to encourage you to pause and to meditate on the ideas that are presented within these pages. Enjoy them.

We imperfect human beings can learn to live better by letting ourselves love and be loved by a Perfect God.

Rabbi Shais Taub

If we genuinely love God, and so love all of God's creatures, we will always align our will with God's will, and so behave in ways that are righteous.

Dr. Louis E. Newman

Sin is a form - perhaps the primary form - of spiritual dysfunction. To be sinful, then, is to be alienated from God and in need of direction or renewed connection. It is a state in which we find ourselves when we become aware that we are disconnected from God.

Dr. Louis E. Newman

Teshuvah entails a return to our truest selves and to God – the godliness in us.

Rav Kook

The gates of *teshuvah* are always open.

Lamentations 3:43

God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.

Ezekiel 33:11

Guilt is a self-made poison that we administer to ourselves. It makes us feel under attack; justifies our feelings of anger towards ourselves or others; destroys our self-esteem or confidence; destroys our sense of peace; makes us feel unloved or unlovable.

Gerald Jampolsky

Repentance genuinely annihilates the psychic quality called “guilt” and so it bursts the chain of evil’s reproductive power. This then is the way in which it enables man to embark on new and guiltless courses.

Max Scheler

However great a man's transgressions may be, they fail to penetrate the innermost core of his soul. Always and under all circumstances there remains something pure, precious and sacred in man's soul.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

Teshuvah is the process by which we regain inner peace. Through the process of *teshuvah* we return to our natural home of inner peace and perfect wholeness and become aware of our Eternal Spirit.

Rebbe Natan of Nemirov

He returns to his starting point, to where he stood prior to embarking upon the road of sin, and
everything that occurred in the meantime disappears
as if it had never been.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

What is complete *teshuvah*? When one comes upon a situation in which he once transgressed, and it is possible to do so again, but he refrains and doesn't transgress on account of his repentance.

Maimonides – Laws of Repentance 2:1

I was aware of the importance of *teshuvah* for my mental health even as a young child. Every year at High Holyday services I would earnestly try to do *teshuvah* for yelling at my parents. I knew that I'd done something wrong, felt bad about it, asked forgiveness from my parents, but the final step (not repeating the offense) never 'took'.

It would be a few days, perhaps a few weeks, but inevitably I would end up yelling again. Then I felt twice as bad because my *teshuvah* hadn't worked. It wasn't until I became aware of the cause of my yelling that things changed.

Real change is possible if the *cause* of the behavior is addressed. The Choose Again Six-Step Process is designed to find and heal the root causes of patterns of negative behavior. By using the Choose Again Six-Step Process described here, I discovered that the feelings of frustration that were aroused in me and caused me to yell were the same feelings I had as a small child when my mother was too busy to pay attention to me. At that time I judged myself as worthless and that became a limiting belief, driving future behaviors that would bring me more evidence of my worthlessness.

Each of us is created *B'tzelem Elohim* – In God's Image. None of us is a mistake and it is not possible for us to be worthless – our worth is established by God. The *teshuvah* that I then realized I must do (step six) was to ask forgiveness of God for my mistaken belief that I am worthless. It worked and I have not yelled nor been tempted to yell since.

There are two different *teshuvah* processes in play here. The first is the one between me and another person, in which yelling is the offense I wish to address. The second is between me and God, and it is my mistaken belief that I am worthless that I must correct. Conflicts between people can *always* be traced to underlying, *different* transgressions against God. It is the disconnection between man and God that this booklet addresses.

The Choose Again Six-Step Process will help to identify the hidden offenses against God, which are the mistaken beliefs we made up as children that we are less than the whole, complete, inherently worthy beings that God created. By correcting these beliefs and firmly re-establishing the truth – that we are created in God's Image *B'tzelem Elohim* – the mistaken beliefs will wither. Thus, we can reconnect with God, achieve inner peace, get rid of guilt, re-establish our personal freedom, and change our behavior in positive ways – all important aspects of *teshuvah.* This step-by-step process is akin to a *cheshbon hanafesh* – an accounting of the soul.

Applying the Choose Again Six-Step Process to *any* and *every* upset no matter how small – in line at the grocery store, in traffic, at home or at the office – will result in increased inner peace and happiness. Catching each small upset and applying the six steps to it eventually leads to huge changes in the big things such as improvements in your relationships. It will allow you to reclaim your innocence. Try it – you'll like it!

Step 1: **I** am Upset.

Recognizing that there is a problem is the first step.

An upset can be defined as any time you are not at peace.

Perhaps you were angry that you spilled your coffee.

Perhaps you reacted to someone else's mistake.

Perhaps your partner pushed your buttons - again.

Identify the upset.

Anne's example: I yelled when my kids weren't listening to me.

Step 2: **Me**. This is about me.

Take full responsibility for the upset. This is not about the other person no matter the situation. Blaming someone else merely gives that person power over your happiness, which they do not have. Taking full responsibility is the key. This is the most difficult and most important step.

Anne's example: This is not about the kids not listening, it is about my feeling of frustration, which tells me I have work to do to heal a mistaken belief about myself.

Step 3: **F**ocus on the Feeling.

How do you **feel** when you think about the upset?

Take the time to identify your feelings – or the strongest feeling – and allow yourself to experience them completely. Use the feelings list that follows to help you.

You have to be 'in the feeling' in order to make a genuine change in your life. You have to feel it to heal it.

Anne's example: I feel angry and frustrated.

To help you identify your feelings here are a few suggestions:

Abandoned	Cheated	Fearful	Offended	Shame
Afraid	Confused	Heartbroken	Persecuted	Tortured
Angry	Cornered	Helpless	Punished	Unsafe
Anxious	Defeated	Horrified	Rage	Violent
Ashamed	Devastated	Inadequate	Rejected	Vulnerable
Betrayed	Disappointed	Indignant	Sadness	Weak
Blame	Embarrassed	Loss	Scorn	Worn out

Step 4: **R**emember the Feeling

The feelings that you had when you spilled your coffee or whatever the triggering event was, are familiar – you've felt this way many times before. These feelings are a replay of an early memory.

Your feelings will lead you to a memory of a time, usually in early childhood, when you **felt** exactly the same way. How old were you then? What was happening in that memory?

Anne's example: I'm four years old, trying to get my mother's attention, but she is busy in the kitchen and ignores me. That makes me so mad!

Step 5: Establish the judgment you made at that time.

As a small child you judged yourself negatively – perhaps as unlovable, unworthy, helpless, bad, guilty, or stupid - depending on the circumstances of the upset. Someone may have been angry with you, or disappointed, or they may have hurt you. Your judgment of yourself became a deeply held belief about yourself and that this belief IS NOT TRUE! However, these deeply held beliefs have been dictating your behavior ever since. You need to correct these beliefs.

Anne's example: My four-year-old self judged me as inadequate: If I had been worthy, my mother would have paid attention to me.

Step 6: Embrace the Truth of Who You Are

You are created *B'tzelem Elohim* – In God's Image. You are as God intended you to be. Your worth is established by God. It is therefore untrue for you to consider yourself less than, or bad, or unworthy, stupid, unlovable or a victim. God's forgiveness is assured, so you can correct these faulty ideas by saying to yourself or out loud:

> "Forgive me for believing that I am ..." Fill in the blank
>
> "Forgive me for forgetting that I am created in God's Image"
>
> "Forgive me for forgetting that my worth is intrinsic "

When you revisit the memory that you retrieved in Step 4 how do you feel now? If your feelings are neutral, then you have achieved a healing of the belief that you developed at that time. If the feelings are still there, then you need to repeat steps 4 to 6. These beliefs are strong and stubborn and so need to be processed with every upset - this is not a quick fix. It may take some time, but you are worth the effort!

Anne's example: I can see that my mother was busy getting dinner ready and didn't hear me – a neutral fact. Now that I am reminded of my true worth, I am no longer tempted to yell when someone is not listening or ignores me.

Teshuvah is the highest expression of man's capacity to choose freely – it is a manifestation of the Divine in man.

Adin Steinsaltz

The ultimate purpose of wisdom is *teshuvah* and doing good.

Rava - Berachot 17a

Choose Again Six-Step Process Summary:

Step 1: **I** am Upset.
Step 2: **M**e. This is about me.

Step 3: **F**ocus on the Feeling.
Step 4: **R**emember the Feeling
Step 5: **E**stablish the judgment you made.
Step 6: **E**mbrace the Truth of Who You Are

You'll notice that this spells out 'I'm Free', which is a helpful mnemonic.

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About the author:

Anne is the former Principal of Temple Sholom Religious School where she worked for over 20 years. Originally from Leeds in England, she studied geology at the University of Edinburgh and then at The University of British Columbia. Anne recently launched her proactive parenting consultancy, which focuses on prevention of bullying, addiction, depression, and suicide by teaching parents how to increase their child's awareness of his/her inherent worth. She facilitates the Choose Again Society's weekly healing circle and consults with the Jewish community in Vancouver on matters such as education and addiction.

Anne is available to for speaking engagements and courses through her website.

Find out more about Anne and her work at: www.anneandrew.com