

## On Repentance and Repair: Institutional *T'shuvah*

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Many of our communities, our institutions, are finally coming face-to-face with brokenness, with wrongdoing, sometimes even tragic wrongdoing coming from within their systems and within our systems. Can you speak to how these steps of personal *t'shuvah* can be brought to the work we are and need to be engaged in our institutions?

I have found [they] work on the personal level, on the deeply, deeply most intimate personal level of our lives. They work on the institutional level, on the broader social level, on a national level. And when we hold them up, they can be a mirror that illuminates what's missing in our processes.

When we say, wow, there's some real work that's happening here, let's see where we are, and then you say, OK, this confession happened. What does it look like? Has it done everything it needs to do? Are victims feeling cared for?

What about starting to change? What has changed? What hasn't? Are we clear that the person is beginning to do the work in a way that won't cause the harm again, that systems are changing, right?

What amends have happened? What amends haven't happened? Are the people who are-- person or people harmed getting what they need? What apologies have and haven't happened?

Are the people who are harmed, the person that were harmed, are they feeling appeased? And if not, why not? And what needs to happen to get there, right?

And most critically, what needs to happen to make sure that this is never going to happen again? And what needs to happen so that everything that happened, steps one, two, three, and four were so profound that when we get to step five it's obvious, right? Naturally, step five should not be a choice. Step five should be a natural and organic outcome of steps one, two, three, and four.

By the time you get to step five, it's like, well, so clearly I am so different and so transformed by all of the other things I've been doing that there's no way I could possibly be over there, you know, doing the things-- the things that I did before, those horrible things. I think so often in our institutions, the more our institutions of trust can show up and act like institutions of trust when things go wrong instead of offering what psychologist Jennifer Freyd calls institutional betrayal, right, which is like another layer of trauma, another injury on top of the original injury, right-- when I love and feel connected to a place that is my home and it doesn't live up to my expectations, when I'm harmed, then it's another layer of trauma. And when it shows up and is there for me when I need it, even if it's not, you know, 70 squagillion dollars, if they just show up and say you have needs now and I see you, I think it just does so much for people's sense of humanity and being seen.

Our institutions have deep work to do. What do you describe as institutional courage?

So this is also-- that's also a phrase from the work of Dr. Jennifer Freyd, who is tremendous. Institutional courage is not, as she says, a binary, right, that there are not institutions that are brave and institutions that are not brave, right. It is a journey, and every institution needs to find their way step-by-step and to do the thing that is scary but that meets the needs of the people that were harmed, that is the thing that feels vulnerable but that attends to the needs of the people who have trusted it and then to walk the next step. And what is the next step after that, right?

OK, it's great that we did this, but we can't stop here. What is the next thing after this that we can do to be bigger and braver and to better model our Jewish values and to better be an example of what caring for our people really can be and that every time an institution takes that step, it shows every other institution what's possible. And it offers more healing and more light into the world. And it cares better for the people who need it to.