To make tešuḇā (לְשׁוֹת תְשׁוֹבָה): “Turning” in Tannaitic Literature

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- תשובה: ("turning?", "repentance?")
- "תשובה" ("turning[?]", "repentance[?]"")

- Tannaitic Literature: Earliest layer of Rabbinic sources (3rd century CE)
Structure of the paper

1. Occurrences, Semantics

2. Different usages of חשבה in Tannaitic sources

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1. Occurrences, Semantics
1. Occurrences

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2. Semantics

 Shib ("to go back, to return")

שוב ⇝ תשובה
2. Semantics

- Physical return
- Answer
- Counterargument
2. Semantics

- Physical return
- Answer
- Counterargument
- Return to God (?)
2. Semantics

- Physical return
- Answer
- Counterargument
- Return to God (?)

Not attested in pre-Tannaitic times
2. Different usages of חסובה in Tannaitic sources
2.1. as a return to the tradition of the fathers
2.1. as a return to the tradition of the fathers

‘Amidah (lit. prayer, 2nd cent. CE).

- “turning back” (לשוב, לשוב)
- “to your Torah” (לתורה, לתרותך)
- “to you” (לפני, לפניך)
- “to your worship” (لدヴァרה, לעובדך)
2.2. The functions of the תשובה
2.2.1. Suspension and withdrawal of divine punishment
2.2.1. Suspension and withdrawal of divine punishment

mJoma 8,8:

The השובה atones for lighter transgressions and for (the transgression) of positive and negative commandments. For severe transgressions it suspends (punishment) until the Day of Atonement.
2.2.1. Suspension and withdrawal of divine punishment

Sifre Bamidbar 112 (121 Horovitz):

Does the השובה also atones in cases of extirpation (כרתו)?
2.2.1. Suspension and withdrawal of divine punishment

Tos. Kippurim 4,5 (251 Lieberman):

The atones (only) for minor transgressions of positive and negative commandments ... And what are major transgressions? (Those punishable by) extirpation.
2.2.1. Suspension and withdrawal of divine punishment

Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael (Baḥodeš 7 [228 Horovitz / Rabin]):

If one has transgressed a positive commandment and makes תשובה, he is forgiven on the spot [...]

If one has violated a negative commandment and makes תשובה alone has not the power of atonement. The תשובה merely leaves the matter pending (i.e. it suspends the actual punishment) and the Day of Atonement brings forgiveness. [...]

2.2.1. Suspension and withdrawal of divine punishment

If one wilfully commits transgressions punishable by extirpation (כרת) [...] and makes חשבה, the חשבה cannot leave the matter pending nor can the Day of Atonement bring forgiveness, but both חשבה and the Day of Atonement bring him half a pardon, and chastisements secure him half a pardon. [...] 

If one has profaned the name of Heaven and makes חשבה, his חשבה cannot make the punishment pending, neither can the Day of Atonement bring him forgiveness nor can sufferings cleanse him of his guilt. But חשבה and the Day of Atonement both can merely make the matter pend, and the day of death, which the suffering preceding it, complete the atonement.
2.2.1. Suspension and withdrawal of divine punishment

שובה

Salvation
Healing
Divine mercy
Peace
2.2.2. Times and modality of “making יהושע”
2.2.2. Times and modality of “making תשובה”

Tos. Qiddušin 1, 16 (281 L.)

If a man was evil his entire life but at the end he made תשובה, the omnipresent accepts him.
2.2.2. Times and modality of “making תשובה”

mJoma 8,9

If one should say I shall sin and repent, sin and repent, no opportunity will be given to him to repent.
2.2.3. The ושווה and criminal law
2.2.3. The תשובה and criminal law

Tos. Baba Qamma 10,39 (58 L.)

Thieves who snuck in by stealth and then made תשובה: All of them are liable to restore what they have stolen. If only one of them repents, he is liable to restore only his share. If he had been taking out what was in the house and placing it before the others, then he is liable to make restitution of all that had been stolen.
2.2.4. The positive reaction to the יהוה as a divine behaviour
2.2.4. The positive reaction to theTESO Generated Response as a divine behaviour

Mekhila de-Rabbi Ishmael (Šira 4 [130 H. / R.])

יש גבור במדינה בשעה שה哈尔שה יצא Midlands עוד לא להחזירו
אלו埃尔 הק즓 אנון כנאל重要な ישראל ישרע'ועשינ רזונה
כביכול גזרה יוצאת מלפניו ... עשו תשובה מיד הוא מחזירה

There may be a mighty hero (in the land), but once the arrow leaves his hand, he is unable to make it come back, since it is gone out of his hand.

The Holy One, blessed He be, however, is not so. But when Israel fails to do the will of God, a decree issues forth from before him [...] but when Israel makes he immediately makes it turn back.
2.2.4. The positive reaction to the השובה as a divine behaviour

Sifre Bamidbar 134 (180 H.)

רבי יהודה בן巴巴 אומר: אומר multiflōt אפלת נוה יתמר הרבח איניע יפישר עלא אהל אתה
אמר עשה תשובה ואני מקבל שנאמר המחיית בעב פשעך
והען חטאיך

Rabbi Jehuda ben Baba says: “This is similar to a man registered in the protocol of accusation (קונטרסים = commentarius) of the (Roman) kingdom. Even if he gives great sums of money, he cannot extricate himself from it. But you say (instead): “Repent, and I will accept,” as it is written (Isa. 44:22): I have wiped away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like a mist.”
2.2.5. as a hermeneutic category
Then the Lord rained down burning sulphur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24): If they make השובה, it would be ordinary rain; if not, it will be burning sulphur and fire. And you (scil. God) did not definitely decree destruction upon them until they displayed their utmost wickedness.
2.3. Does the Tannaitic תשובת consist in a process of inner transformation?
2.3. ושווה, inner transformation?

ושוה: introspective, critical self-reflection of an individual about the own past deeds that results in the decision to take distance from those deeds and in the subsequent atonement.
2.3. inner transformation?

Sifre Devarim 43 (102 Finkelstein)

Set your heart to the road on which you came (Jer 31,20). The Holy one, blessed he be, said to them: “Look at the ways in which you walked and make restitution.”

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2.3. inner transformation?

Sifre Devarim 31 (52 F.)

ללמדך שביה ראובן חקפנה כל ימי על מעשה עד שבועה משלו וקבלו בתשבה

You are hereby taught that Reuven afflicted himself all of his days because of that act, until Moses accepted him in (his) השובה.
At that hour, Elisha wept and died. Rabbi Meir rejoiced in his heart and said: “it seems that my master died in the middle of the inner transformation.”
2.3. Inner transformation?

Baba Mešiaʿ 4, 10

ואם היהבעל תשובה לא יאמר לו זכור מעשיך הראשונים

If someone makes her a reply, one should not say to him: “think about your former deeds!”
2.3. inner transformation?

**Baba Mešia** 4, 10

If someone makes a response, one should not say to him: “think about your former deeds!

And if he is a son of proselytes, one should not say to him: “Think about the deeds of your fathers!”
3. Conclusions
3. **Conclusions**

- **חֲמוֹר** is an inner, mental movement,

- consisting in “Turning back” from previous behaviours,

- resulting from a **self-reflection**,

- associated with “**conversion**”,

- entailing a “**turning back**” of **God**, who suspends his punishments
3. Conclusions

Neʿilah Prayer (4th Cent. C.E.)

You desire the回复 of the wicked ones and you do not have pleasure in their death.
Thank you!