

CAN TESHUVA HELP US “RIGHT SIZE” CANCEL CULTURE?



ANCHOR IN JEWISH WISDOM

The famous Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides, often referred to as Rambam, [1138-1204] wrote a whole book on the laws of Teshuva. Here, he outlines the series of steps that one must take in order to do complete Teshuvah.

- ▶▶ Remorse: Verbally confessing to one’s wrongdoings
- ▶▶ Regret: Actively demonstrate regret for the wrongdoing
- ▶▶ Resolve: Commit to never engage in this wrongdoing again
- ▶▶ Repeal: Abandoning all thoughts and actions that led the wrongdoing
- ▶▶ Refrain: Confronting the same situation and not doing wrong again

(Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah/Laws of Repentance 2:1-2)

You might be surprised to learn that Rambam also has guidance for the person who was harmed, essentially positing that teshuva is a two-way street:

- ▶▶ When the one who sinned implores [a person] for pardon, he should grant him pardon wholeheartedly and soulfully. Even if one persecuted him and sinned against him exceedingly, he should not be vengeful and grudge-bearing” (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah/Laws of Repentance 2:10).

Reflect on these texts and ask:

- ▶▶ What do these two texts tell us about forgiveness? Where does accountability and compassion show up in Rambam’s texts?
- ▶▶ Does the current climate of cancelling allow for the values of accountability and compassion to show up?

