

Let Us Return

The season of *T'Shuvah* runs forty days from the first of Elul to Yom Kippur. During the month of Elul the *shofar* is sounded and special prayers are made while turning to *Adonai* for restoration each day at the synagogue. The last ten days of this 40-day period (beginning on *Yom Teruah* and ending on *Yom Kippur*) are referred to as the “*High Holy Days*” or the “*Days of Awe*” (*Yamim Nora'im*). During the season of *T'Shuvah* we look in retrospect into our life, seek forgiveness and return to Him.

T'Shuvah is a Hebrew word that means *to answer or to return or to repent*. It is a sort of death and rebirth: the death of our past life and the birth of a new life and a new creation: “¹⁷ Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). It is an awakening from the slumber induced by sin, and manifests itself in the power of the Holy Spirit working in the heart of a believer who trusts in the Almighty’s salvation through *Yeshua*. *T'Shuvah* is a gift from the Lord and involves four basic steps:

1. Forsaking the sin: “One who covers up his transgressions will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them finds mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

2. Regretting the breach in your relationship with God and others: “¹ For the music director: a psalm of David, ² when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he went to Bathsheba. ³ Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your mercy. According to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. ⁴ Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ⁵ For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. ⁶ Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are just when You speak, and blameless when You judge. ⁷ Behold, I was born in iniquity and in sin when my mother conceived me. ⁸ Surely You desire truth in the inner being. Make me know wisdom inwardly. ⁹ Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean. Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. ¹⁰ Let me hear joy and gladness, so the bones You crushed may rejoice. ¹¹ Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ¹² Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹³ Do not cast me from Your presence— take not Your Ruach ha-Kodesh from me. ¹⁴ Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. ¹⁵ Then will I teach transgressors Your ways and sinners will return to You. ¹⁶ Deliver me from bloodguilt, O God—God of my salvation. Then my tongue will sing for joy of Your righteousness. ¹⁷ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise. ¹⁸ For You would not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it, nor be pleased by burnt offerings. ¹⁹ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. ²⁰ In Your favor do good to Zion. Build up the walls of Jerusalem. ²¹ Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices and whole burnt offerings. Then bulls will be offered on Your altar” (Psalm 51).

3. Confessing the truth before God and making amends (restitution) with others we have harmed: “⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:19). “¹⁶ So confess your offenses to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous person is very powerful” (James 5:16). “²³ Therefore if you are presenting your offering upon the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering” (Matthew 5:23-24).

4. Forgetting the past and moving forward with the Lord: “¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself as having taken hold of this. But this one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the reward of the upward calling of God in Messiah *Yeshua*” (Philippians 3:13-14).