

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).