

תְּשׁוּבָה

“Prayer of Repentance”

The fifth prayer of the *Shemonei Esrei* or “Eighteen Benedictions” is the prayer for Repentance or *Teshuvah*. The first word of the prayer is הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ, *hashiveinu*, “cause us to return . . .” If we pray that G-d will cause us to return, it means that we have walked away!



The prayer goes on “Cause us to return, our Father, to Your Torah.” When we disobey and do things that are wrong, we are not walking according to HaShem’s Torah (remember, Torah means “teaching”) but according to our own desires and thoughts. When we are honestly sad about what we’ve done, and we are willing to do whatever it takes to make the situation right, then we are returning to HaShem’s ways—we’re doing *teshuvah*.

Yeshua told a wonderful story about *teshuvah*: “Once upon a time there was a man who had several sons. One son, who was selfish, decided he wanted the money his father had saved for him so that he could leave home and be on his own. His father, knowing that he need to learn some very important lessons, gave his son the money and they said their good-byes. The self-centered son was no on his own. He spent his money on whatever he saw, not giving any thought to how long his money would last. It wasn’t long until all his money was gone, and then the “friends” he had made (who actually liked him just because he had money) left him for others who had more money. Now he had no money, and no friends. The only job he could find was feeding the farm animals at a nearby farm. One day, because he had not been able to buy any food, he even ate the food he was using to feed the animals! Feeling so helpless he suddenly thought of his father, and of home. He knew that even the hired servants were eating better than he was! But how could he return home after treating his father in such a terrible way? But after thinking about it, he decided he had no choice. He would return home, ask his father to treat him just like one of the servants and not as his son. He gathered the few things he had and headed for home. As he approached the house, one of the servants of the house saw him coming and went, running, to tell his father. So joyful was the father that he told all of his servants to quickly cook a fine meal and to prepare for a celebration. When his son arrived at the door, the father hugged him and cried with joy. His son had returned—done *teshuvah*—he had come back to honor his father.”

This story can be found in your Bibles at Luke 15:11-32.