**5. Teshuvah**

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| Return us back to your Torah, our Father.  And draw us closer to your worship, our king.  And bring us back in full repentance before You.  Blessed are You, Adonai, who desires teshuvah (repentance). | הֲשִׁיבֵנוּ אָבִינוּ לְתורָתֶךָ.  וְקָרְבֵנוּ מַלְכֵּנוּ לַעֲבודָתֶךָ  וְהַחֲזִירֵנוּ בִּתְשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ.  בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הָרוצֶה בִּתְשׁוּבָה: |

This berakhah immediately follows our request for knowledge, wisdom and understanding. It is as if the order of the berakhot implies that once we are wise, the first thing we recognize is that we are not perfect, we have shortcomings.

* What does it mean that we ask God to bring us back in teshuvah? Why can't we just do this ourselves?
* How do you feel when you're told you must do teshuvah? Does it help you to do teshuvah or make it harder?
* The last line says that God wants teshuvah. Wouldn't God just prefer that we never mess things up in the first place? What do you think?

**Teshuvah and Forgiveness in the Jewish Tradition**

**Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Ethics, 6:6**

When a person does something wrong to another person the person who has been wronged shouldn't keep quiet. Rather, it is a mitzvah for her to tell the other person and say to her, "Why did you do that to me?" or "Why did you do that wrong thing to me?"

And if the person who did something wrong asks for forgiveness, the other person must forgive her. And the forgiver should not be cruel at that moment.

* Why is it sometimes important to not keep quiet when someone has done something wrong to you?
* How does this law connect up with our description of God as "desiring repentance?"

**Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Teshuvah, 2:1**

"What is complete teshuvah? She who is confronted by the identical situation in which she previously sinned and she is able to do the same sin again, but she nevertheless doesn't do so because she wants to repent, and not because she is too afraid or too weak [to repeat the sin].

* Why does one have to face the same situation in order to know that one has done teshuvah?
* What does this teach us about what teshuvah really is? What is teshuvah meant to accomplish?

**Babylonian Talmud 10a**

In the neighborhood of Rabbi Meir there lived some bullies who hassled him so much that he prayed for them to die. His wife Beruriah said to him: Why do suppose your prayer should be heard? Do you justify yourself because of the Psalmist’s pleas, ‘Let sins cease from the land?’ Sinners don’t have to die for sins to cease; it is sufficient that they stop sinning. Rather, you should ask mercy for them so that they may repent. Rabbi Meir did ask God to have mercy on them and they returned in teshuvah.