



## Elul: Together, Preparing Our Hearts for the King

### I. THE MONTH OF ELUL

**A. Summary:** Jewish tradition emphasizes that the month of *Elul* is a time of Divine mercy which is particularly conducive to prayer and repentance, as part of the preparatory process for entering into the awesome judgment of Rosh HaShana and the cleansing power of the Day of Atonement. In the words of our sages, "*The King is in the Field*;" the Holy One, blessed be He, makes Himself especially close at hand. For Jews, the month of *Elul* is marked by critical, scouring soul-searching; an extreme reality check that forces us, through prayer, introspection and serious character examination, to a highly rarified level of sobriety and personal honesty. Throughout Israel's exile among the nations, even the Gentiles were intensely aware of the Hebrew calendar and knew beyond a doubt when *Elul* would fall out... they were able to sense a palpable, visible change in their Jewish neighbors. [https://www.templeinstitute.org/field-of-dreams\\_field-of-blood.htm](https://www.templeinstitute.org/field-of-dreams_field-of-blood.htm)

### B. Notable Aspects

1. *Teshuvah*: Elul is the 6th month in the "Biblical Calendar." The first day of Elul marks the beginning of the 40 days of awe that lead us to Yom Kippur, the most solemn day on the Hebrew Calendar. Elul is traditionally known as a month of Teshuvah (meaning "returning") or Repentance. It is a time for us to prepare physically for the Fall Festivals and spiritually for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.
  2. *Spiritual Accounting*: During Elul, many people perform a daily spiritual accounting (*cheshbon*) where we step back and look at ourselves critically and honestly, with the intention of improving. Elul has historically been associated with repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.
  3. *I Am My Beloveds*: The four Hebrew letters of the word Elul (aleph-lamed-vav-lamed) are the first letters of the four words *Ani l'dodi v'dodi lee* – "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 6:3). The month of Elul is a special time to focus on that relationship.
  4. *Arousing to Repentance*: In order to arouse us to the task of repentance, one Hebraic custom to blow the shofar every morning after prayers during the month of Elul. This is meant as a call to awaken ourselves to repentance, a warning to remember that judgment is coming and we must be sober-minded.
  5. *Psalms 27*: It is also a modern convention to read Psalm 27 daily during this month. David's heart was that God would be his "one thing" (27:4). If I could choose one thing, would it be God?
  6. *The King is In the Field*: The month of Elul is a time of spiritual workdays. We have the holy task of preparing for ourselves for the coming fall festivals, but without any holy days in the month. The traditional Jewish understanding is that YHWH is more accessible during this month. The picture used is one of a king who visits the workers in the field. In that setting there is a different protocol for the king as He is more accessible and visiting us "in our work environment" than if we as the workers (as is more normative) were visiting the king in his own palace.
- C. Biblical Occurrence:** Historically, this month has great significance, because it was on the first day of Elul that Moses—following the sin of the Golden Calf—ascended Mount Sinai to receive a new, second set of stone tablets. Forty days later—on the seminal Yom Kippur—Moses returned to the people with tablets in hand, signaling a repair of the breach between the Jewish people and God. In light of this, in Jewish history, these days have retained special significance as a period of divine grace.

### II. FALL FESTIVALS ARE ABOUT YESHUA'S RETURN

#### A. Trumpets: The Return of the King & the Rapture

*14For if we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Yeshua. 15For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in*

*the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18Therefore comfort one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18*

**B. Yom Kippur:** Israel's National Salvation

*9And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 10I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. Zechariah 12:9-10*

**C. Sukkot:** The Millennium & God's Faithful Provision & Presence

*1Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. 4Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. Revelation 20:1-6*

**D. Shemini Atzeret (the Eighth Day):** Yeshua will relinquish all rule to His Father and YHWH Himself will descend and dwell on the new earth with the new heavens with the redeemed from all ages (1 Corinthians 15:24-25; Revelation 20:7-22:5)

### III. ELUL FOCUSES OF TESHUVAH

- A. Individual Teshuvah/Renewal:** This has been the focus in the past when heading into this important season. For this year, I sensed to stress the corporate areas of teshuvah/renewal.
- B. Family Teshuvah/Renewal:** This will be the focus of the teaching this week.
- C. Congregational Teshuvah/Renewal:** I will talk more about this next week
- D. City Wide Congregational Teshuvah/Renewal:** We will pray and look for teshuvah/renewal opportunities in this area during this time

### IV. THE SABBATH BLESSINGS

**A. The Sabbath - Relevant for All:** The Sabbath is not just a "Jewish" holy day, but is relevant (for all of God's people) [Gen. 2:2-3, Lev. 23:1-3, Is. 56:6-7]

1. *YHWH Blessed This Day in the Garden*

*2On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so He rested from all His work. 3And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when He rested from all his work of creation. Genesis 2:1-3*

2. *It is a Biblical Sign of the Foreigners Connection to YHWH*

*6"Also the foreigners who join themselves to YHWH, to minister to Him, and to love the name of YHWH, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath and holds fast My covenant; 7Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples." Isaiah 56:6-7*

3. *Part of the Future Calendar*

*"And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath, all mankind will come to bow down before Me," says YHWH. Isaiah 66:23*

## B. The Sabbath is One of the Ten Commandments

1. Called to Remember: It is the only one of the ten commandments that God calls us to remember (Exodus 20:8).

2. Not Optional: God didn't make Sabbath keeping any more optional than He did the commandment against adultery. Clifford Goldstein in *A Pause for Peace*.

C. **A 24-Hour Period**: The Sabbath is a 24-hour period on the seventh day of the week which (according to God's way of determining the days [Genesis 1:8,13, etc.]) goes from Friday evening sundown to Saturday evening sundown.

D. **Delighting in the Sabbath**: the Scriptures say that the Sabbath is to be a delight to us (Isaiah 58:13).

1. Notice it doesn't say to "endure" the Sabbath.

2. Yeshua stated that the Sabbath was made for mankind.

*27Then Yeshua said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. 28So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!"*

Mark 2:27-28

3. It is not to be a day of frustration but a day of delight, refreshment, and love.

4. It is to be a mini-vacation that we can look forward to all week long.

E. **God's Promised Blessings for the Sabbath** [Jeremiah 17:21-27]

1. YHWH promised Israel that if they would not bring loads of commerce into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, that they would always have a Davidic king on the throne and Jerusalem would remain as a city forever.

*24 "But if you obey me, says YHWH, and do not carry on your trade at the gates or work on the Sabbath day, and if you keep it holy, 25 then kings and their officials will go in and out of these gates forever. There will always be a descendant of David sitting on the throne here in Jerusalem. Kings and their officials will always ride in and out among the people of Judah in chariots and on horses, and this city will remain forever. Jeremiah 17:24-25*

2. Seemingly Unrelated Blessings: A spiritual principle from this story is that there are seemingly unrelated blessings that will be ours as we obey God in honoring His Sabbath, and in getting this area right, you naturally get a lot of other things right.

F. **Yeshua**: Our relationship with Yeshua is to be a primary focus on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:6-8).

G. **Overview**: From Friday at sundown until Saturday at sundown, we cease from our secular/normal labors, our own worldly/personal pursuits, and our weekly chores/responsibilities and we actively do rest, fellowship with family and friends, corporately assemble with other Believers for worship and study, and specifically and intentionally focus on God.

## V. A FAMILY AFFAIR

A. **Erev Shabbat (Friday Night) Family Altars**: this is a once a week check in together at the beginning of the Sabbath

1. Challenge to the Husbands/Fathers: step up to provide greater godly leadership within your families.

2. Married Couples as Teams: Call to the women to provide godly influence and leadership with this too: if married, ideally husband and wife work together as a team to specially sanctify this time and space in your home.

3. Household Salvation is Scriptural

B. **We are Priests**

1. Every Home a Sanctuary: God's intent was to have every home a sanctuary; He initially was going to have each male head of household as the "priest" in the home

a. The Levites were His substitutionary plan

*<sup>11</sup>And YHWH said to Moses, <sup>12</sup>"Look, I have chosen the Levites from among the Israelites to serve as substitutes for all the firstborn sons of the people of Israel. The Levites belong to me, <sup>13</sup>for all the firstborn males are mine. On the day I struck down all the firstborn sons of the Egyptians, I set*

*apart for myself all the firstborn in Israel, both of people and of animals. They are mine; I am YHWH.*” Numbers 3:11-13 (NLT)

2. All Believers are Priests: We are a kingdom of priests; a holy nation (1 Peter 2:5; Rev. 1:6, 5:10)  
*4Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ....9But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.* 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-10  
*To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* Revelation 1:5b-6  
*9And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”* Revelation 5:9-10
3. Holy Spirit Indwells Believers: If you are a Believer, the Holy Spirit dwells within you and You are now a priest before him

**C. Elul Recommendation and Challenge:** for the five Erev Shabbats (Friday nights) during the month of Elul (September 7<sup>th</sup> through October 5<sup>th</sup>), to open up your home or go to someone else’s home to gather with others to do three things:

1. Sanctify the Space: Light candles and invite God’s presence to join you
2. Partake of the Lord’s Supper: renew the covenant together
3. Words/Prayers of Blessing and Affirmation: to pray for and to encourage those participating
4. Further Recommendations:
  - a. *families*: don’t forget the singles and those without close family to include them regularly in these Sabbath meals.
  - b. *singles can form alliances together*: when I was single I formed a multi-year erev-Shabbat alliance with another single friend.
  - c. *join in another group*: the erev Shabbat group that Steve & the James’ lead is open for anyone who doesn’t have a place
  - d. *can enter in without the value*: it’s ok if you don’t see it or have a value for the Sabbath; you can still enter into this five week challenge.
5. Erev Shabbat Guides: these are available and can be used as a prototype with which each family unit can tailor to meet their own desires and needs.