

## A Balanced Approach

*Elul* is the name of the sixth Hebrew month and it started yesterday on the 1<sup>st</sup> of *Elul* 5780. This is the month that precedes the seventh month (*Tishrei*), which is the holiest month of the Hebrew year because the seventh month is when the Fall High Holy Days occur. The Hebrew of *Song of Songs* 6:3: “*I am my beloved's, and He is mine*” (*Ani Ledodi V'dodi Li*) is probably the most famous Hebrew Scripture found in Israeli jewelry. Many people purchase rings in Israel engraved with that verse. The first Hebrew Letter in the words of this inscription (*Alef, Lamed, Vav and Lamed* in proper Hebrew right-to-left order) forms the acronym **אלול** spelling *ELUL*! This month we are under the blessing that: “*I am my beloved's, and He is mine.*” This is a phenomenal description of the love relationship *Adonai* has for His people. If we think of *Elul* as the month before a wedding it becomes evident that we are in a season of pre-nuptial preparation for the eventual marriage between *Yeshua* and His Beloved Bride. This preparation is more spiritual than physical. No wonder in Jewish thought an entire month (*Elul*) is dedicated to preparing oneself to marry the King of Kings, the King of the Universe (*Melech HaOlam*).

Also in Hebrew thought, *Teshuvah* (the Hebrew word for repentance, literally “*to answer or return*”) describes the period of 40 days, from the 1<sup>st</sup> of *Elul* (yesterday) to the 10<sup>th</sup> of *Tishrei* (*Yom Kippur*). In *Leviticus* 23:24 *Adonai* commanded *Moshe* to observe the first day of *Tishrei* as a *Memorial of Teruah*, (*teruah* is one of the four blowing of the *shofar* calls and it also means shouting). This is the first day of the Israeli civil year or *Rosh Hashanah*. In the English Bible this day is known as the *Feast of Trumpets* (the Hebrew word translated blowing of trumpets in the NKJV's *Lev. 23:24* is blowing the *Shofar*). This day begins a final ten-day period from the *Feast of Trumpets* to the *Feast of Atonement*. These ten days are known as the *Days of Awe* (*Yamim Nora'im*). Each morning during the days of *Elul*, the *shofar* (the ram's horn) is blown to warn the people to repent and return to God {we will ask *Shamash Joe Simpkins* to blow the *shofar*}.

Also according to traditional Jewish thought, *Elul* is a month in which *Adonai's* people can find favor with Him. It is said that the Almighty is like a “*King in the field*” who is easily accessible and approachable, shining His countenance upon all as it is said: “*Seek Adonai while He may be found, call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous one his thoughts, let him return to Adonai, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon*” (*Isaiah 55:6-7*). It is like the words of the old hymn: “*...if you draw nigh to Him, He will draw nigh to you...♪*”

Traditional Jewish thought also justifies the use of the *Elul* designation as “*the month of chessed (mercy) and forgiveness.*” We Messianic Believers are also called to examine our lives and see where we have departed from the Almighty. Everywhere *Yeshua* went *Teshuvah* was always the result. An excellent example is in the life of *Zacchaeus*: “*Then Yeshua said to him, Today salvation has come to this home, because he also is a son of Abraham.*” <sup>10</sup> *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost*” (*Luke 19:9-10*). True Biblical repentance always involves rectification and restitution as it is said: “*so times of relief might come from the presence of Adonai and He might send Yeshua, the Messiah appointed for you.*” <sup>21</sup> *Heaven must receive Him, until the time of the restoration of all the things that God spoke about long ago through the mouth of His holy prophets*” (*Acts 3:20-21*).

*Elul* beckons us to examine the Scriptures and weigh the evidence that Messiah *Yeshua* was who He said He was. Is Messiah *Yeshua* King of your life and your heart yet? *Adonai* has always had a heart to warn people before He proclaims judgment. He warned the people before the flood and warned *Nineveh* before it was ruined – He does not want anyone to receive the wrath of His judgment. The message from *Elul 1* until *Tishrei 1* is clear: “*Repent before Yom Teruah or you will find yourself in the days of awe unprepared.*” In Jewish tradition, everyone tries to settle matters with their friends and family and fulfill their duty to their community by asking for forgiveness from one another before *Yom Teruah*: “*Are you prepared today fully forgive your offenders?*”

Understanding what forgiveness is a key component of this process. This morning *Adonai* wants you and I to fully grasp the impact of not forgiving one another. Our future depends on it, our health depends on it, our

happiness depends on it, our prayer life depends on it, our maturing depends on it, our relationships depend on it, simply put, our entire body, soul and spirit will show the consequences of not fully forgiving our offenders. How do we fully forgive? I know that many of us have truly been hurt and that we are innocent – we did not merit the treatment we were given. Yet the Lord wants you and I to fully forgive not just our enemies – He wants us to forgive our families (especially our mom and dads, sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters) and He wants us to forgive ourselves. Maybe the following will clear up some of the hurdles.

- Forgiveness is not pardoning. Forgiving is releasing an offender emotionally – but pardoning requires a legal authority that has the jurisdiction over the matter to cancel out the consequences, e.g., the US president or a Governor of a State. Only *Adonai* the Righteous Judge and King can pardon, we cannot!
- Forgiveness is seeing an offender's needs and supplying the Lord's solution.
- Forgiveness is to want the Lord to benefit an offender's life (especially to save them).
- Forgiveness is freeing the Lord to reward us unexpectedly.

I want to conclude by sharing from our leadership team's philosophy in *Kol Simcha*. I am personally a person of balance and integrity. I (we) do not want to be misunderstood. I strive to live by the things that I preach and attempt to stay in a balanced position with respect to everything. Together we are truly developing a congregation that is not based on anyone else's rules. We have endeavored to be *Na'ase V'Nishma (we will do and we will shema)* people, respecting one another's rights (even the right to disagree). I am personally motivated by the character quality of consideration. Marilyn is the most considerate person I know. Consideration is an application of the golden rule, and it was evident in *Yeshua*, the Apostles and in Paul's ministry. A favorite verse of mine is: "*But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me*" (*Psalm 26:11, KJV*)

Our leadership team does not know everything and we do not claim to do so. I do not claim to be "*the anointed*" nor do I fail to recognize that I am human and subject to the Romans 7 struggle. Each member of your leadership team has admitted before all some of his or her failures and struggles. Sometimes in a congregation there is reluctance to give leaders space in order to properly lead you. Scripture states that "*without faith (trust) it is impossible to please Adonai*" (*Hebrews 11:6*), and *without trust* it is also impossible to lead His people. We always have to ask ourselves the question: is it possible that *Adonai* is speaking to me via one of these imperfect leaders? We your leaders cheerfully join Paul to endeavor to: "*...show you a more excellent way*" (*1 Cor. 12:31*).