

# Preparing for Yom Kippur: 40 Days of Repentance

www.messianicsabbath.com

## THE MONTH OF ELUL

Just like our calendar where each month reminds us of the season and a mood, the Hebrew sages have determined the spiritual seasons of the year.

The month of Elul is considered the start of the “Season of Repentance,” which stretches from Elul 1 into next month on Tishrei 10, Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement.

www.hebrew4christians.com explains one of the events that set the stage for this season:

*“According to Jewish tradition, then, the month of Elul represents the time that Moses spent on Sinai preparing the second set of tablets after the idolatrous incident of the Golden Calf. Moses ascended on Rosh Chodesh Elul (“Head of the Month of Elul”) and then descended 40 days later on the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei, the end of Yom Kippur, when the repentance of the people was complete. The month of Elul therefore, represents the time of national sin and forgiveness obtained by means of teshuvah (repentance) before the Lord.”*

## OUR PARSHA

- Deut. 11:26-32 – God puts before the people a blessing and a curse – a blessing if they follow the laws of the Torah, a curse if they do not.
- Deut. 12:1-3 – Destroy all traces of pagan worship and idols
- Deut. 12:4-28 – The proper way to offer their meat offerings to God, very specific instructions for eating their offerings in the presence of God vs. eating it wherever they wanted as the idol worshippers in the land of Canaan have done before them. God is making a distinction between pagan worship and how he wants to be worshipped – in a specific place, in his presence.
- Deut. 12:29-14:2 – Warnings against being led into idolatry and what to do if someone is.
- Deut. 14:3-21 – Reiterating a Biblical diet – God cares what we eat.  
It’s right up there with idolatry. The pagans of the land ate all kinds of things that weren’t intended as food. When YHVH is our God, we eat what he tells us, not necessarily whatever is available in the land we’re in, and not necessarily what the people living here before us ate, or what those around us are eating. He has very specific instructions.
- Deut. 14:22-29 – Tithing and offering.
- Deut. 15:1-18 – The Sh’mittah year – the 7<sup>th</sup> year when loans were cancelled, slaves were set free, land reverted back to its original owner – everything was reset and restarted every seven years.
- Deut. 15:19-29 – Setting aside and offering the firstborn of your livestock.
- Deut. 16:1-17 – It ends with the Feasts – just like our 40 days of repentance does.  
It names the three feasts in which they were to appear before the Lord in his holy place - The Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost (both in the Spring) and Sukkot – the Feast of Tabernacles, which is the last one in the Fall. Again he is instructing us to be in his presence on his important days.

These are all things that God has instructed in order to keep them – and us – from idolatry. That’s a good list of how to keep yourself from idolatry today:

- Being diligent in your offerings
- Spending time in the presence of God
- Disassociating with those that encourage idolatry
- Keeping a kosher diet
- Tithing
- Fair treatment of employees and debtors
- Keeping the feasts

These are some of the ways God has given us to set ourselves apart as holy for Him.

## **REPENTANCE FROM IDOLATRY**

Repentance is an ongoing process of discovery and realignment.

### **Idolatry**

- The second commandment is about what we call idolatry. “You are to have no other gods before me.”
- But idolatry can take many forms. It can be anything that we put our trust in besides God, anything we rely on for our security besides God. Anything we put our faith in either in addition to or instead of God is idolatry. When we start trusting in the resource instead of in the Source.
- When we give the resources equal or greater consideration than the Source of those resources, we’ve just crossed the line into idolatry. The 2nd commandment to put no other gods above YHVH is about depending on Him as our first and only source of everything we need.

### **Repentance**

- “Teshuvah” in Hebrew. “Shuv” means to turn. It’s the picture of making a u-turn, seeing your sin and going in the opposite direction.
- Complete repentance has to go beyond quitting something. It’s quitting because you are now aligned with God’s will.
- Idolatry is holding on to something for your security, repentance is letting go of that with your actions and your heart – and instead, holding onto only God and his path.

## **WHERE IDOLATRY HIDES**

### **Discontent**

I get antsy and wish for more. I start trying to do more, trying to do it differently, but mainly I get frustrated that things just aren’t the way they should be and I meddle around trying to change them. Trying to make things happen in my own time and according to my own expectations instead of seeing what God was actually doing and aligning with that.

Remember Numbers 11: The Israelites in the wilderness were discontent with what they had. They’re even lamenting not being in Egypt. Vs. 4 “The people renewed their weeping and said, ‘If only we had meat to eat.’” They asked for meat to eat – the 2nd time. God sends quail outside the camp. They bring it in and heap it all around their tents, forcing God’s presence from their camp.

Discontent can lead us away from God, away from his presence.

## **My Plan**

Repentance is not just stopping what you're doing wrong. True repentance is dropping your will and no longer hauling around of your "if onlys", instead seeking His will and realigning with that. Just doing what's in front of me without wishing for more, trusting God not only for the results, but that the results are already having the effect he wants. I'm at peace, joyful, content and not frustrated.

When I am more aligned with Him, my efforts are more fruitful. I'm more attentive to what I'm currently doing than when I'm wishing for something else. I'm more effective in the situation I'm in.

## **Fear**

Part of repentance is giving up our fear of loss and completely trusting that God can still care for us without the things we fear losing.

- Things I cling to for security,
- Things I will go out of my way to protect,
- Things that have the power to pull me off course,
- Things I put my faith in instead of, or in addition to, God.

Fear is the opposite of faith.

The provisions cannot become more important than the Provider. When I'm plugged into the Source, there's no limit to the resources. There's plenty more where those came from!

He built up my faith and showed me first-hand how He more than provides everything I fear losing. It completely demolished the fear that fueled my idols. If we will let Him, God will replace our fear with faith, and do it with more blessing and provisions than we can imagine.

## **My Conditions**

My conditions might be things like:

- Living close to my family,
- Keeping my career on track,
- Making sure I do whatever I have to keep my job.

It's like I'm crossing my fingers behind my back in my surrender to God. "Yes, yes, Lord, I surrender all, I will do your will, I want to follow you in all my ways... As long as it includes keeping this, not doing that, or not jeopardizing this over here."

To the degree we give them power, to that degree we are not fully able to align with God's path for us.

## **SURRENDERING OUR IDOLS**

What is it we fear about giving ourselves completely to God? Do we really think God is trying to get us aligned with him so that he can make us miserable? Sometimes old notions creep in and we need to take every thought captive and remind ourselves who God really is, and do some serious thinking about who we honestly believe He is. What do our actions say about who we believe God is? We need to realign our theology with truth.

As long as we hold a view of God that we're not safe, we will never surrender. We'll never fully repent or fully realign with him and be comfortable with him in the driver's seat.

This is the picture of complete repentance and realignment with him:

Obedying unencumbered, with no expectation of what the result should look like, no conditions of acceptance, no strings attached, just full-on submission to His will regardless of what it means to your "if onlys", your own plan, your fears and your conditions.

## **CONCLUSION**

This period of Elul is about preparing our hearts, minds, and spirits for the coming Fall Feasts and eventually Yeshua's coming. Use these 40 days to take an honest look at yourself. Where do your idols hide? It starts with asking yourself the hard questions:

- Where am I discontent with what God has provided?

---

- In what areas am I striving beyond what God has provided?

---

- In what areas am I wishing for something better?

---

- Where am I frustrated?

---

- Where am I pursuing my own path?

---

- What fears keep me from trusting His plan?

---

- What belief do I need to sacrifice in order to fully trust God with that issue?

---

- What blessing and provisions am I missing when I strive for what used to be or what could be?

---

Mark your calendar for Elul 1 and ask the hard questions, examine your motives, repent from what you find and ask God to show you his plan.