



Dear Mishpochah in Messiah,

Elul: It is time to awake!

Elul is the last month on the traditional Jewish calendar. This year it begins on the evening of August 8. Elul is a special month, a month of preparation for the fall High Holidays. Elul will probably be the month preceding the return of our Messiah Yeshua, since it is the month prior to the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh HaShana), the next feast to be fulfilled in the Leviticus 23 cycle. If Yeshua returns **this** year, Elul 2002 will be the most important month of spiritual preparation in each of our lives! Wisdom dictates that we make a sober assessment of our spiritual status this month as well as a quality decision to seek the Lord as never before!

The first page of this year's Jewish heritage calendar (Order yours today!) has a beautiful photo of a shofar accompanied by the explanation of its connection with the month of Elul. The shofar is blown every morning during Elul in traditional Jewish synagogues, calling God's people to repentance. The shofar is supposed to evoke trembling, as expressed in Amos 3:6, "*Shall the horn be blown in a city, and the people not tremble?*"

Moses Maimonides, a famous Jewish scholar and theologian of the twelfth century, made the following comment on the meaning of the sounding of the shofar at this time of year:

"Arise from your slumber, you who are asleep; awake from your deep sleep, you who are fast asleep; search your deeds and repent; remember your Creator. Those of you who forget the truth because of pressing vanities, indulging throughout the year in the useless things that cannot profit you nor save you, look into your souls, amend your ways and deeds. Let everyone give up his evil way and his bad purpose."

Awake for the Service of the Creator

A spiritual shofar call was sounded by Rabbi Saul (the Apostle Paul), when he wrote: "*...knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.*" (Romans 13:11) Rabbi Saul, and both of us, are being led by the Ruach HaKodesh to give you a kiss from God this month: **Awake, beloved of the Lord!** Jewish people living in small East European communities in the nineteenth century were awakened in a much more dramatic, physical way. A man called the *shammash* (literally 'servant') went from house to house awakening villagers to attend special Selihot (penitential prayer) services at the synagogue.

Philip Goodman in his book, **The Rosh Hashana Anthology** describes this traditional custom:

"Knocking on the doors or windows of the Jewish homes, the *shammash* chanted in a mixture of Hebrew and Yiddish such exhortations as 'Wake up for the service of the Creator as you were created for this purpose.' 'Be strong as a leopard, swift as an eagle, fleet as a deer, and mighty as a lion, to do the will of your Heavenly Father.' 'Wake up, wake up for the service of the Creator, hasten to the synagogue. Fathers, mothers, boys and girls, wake up and come to serve the Creator.' "

Special hammers, carved out of wood in the shape of a shofar were often used by the *shammashim* to knock on windows or doors. One side of the hammer was etched with an eagle design, the other with a deer, symbolizing the admonition to be swift as the eagle and fleet as the deer to do God's will. In some communities, children poured water over those who were slow to awaken. (This reminds Jamie of the wet washcloth her mother used on her face to awaken her on those school days when she refused to wake up.) The Jewish children in Yemen, eager to participate in the Selihot service, would tie a string to their feet and hang one end out the window. The *shammash* pulled the strings as he made his midnight rounds. He was then joined by a troupe of youngsters who helped him waken the sleeping community by blowing small shofars.

Awake to the Shammash in 2002

The *shammash* today is the Ruach haKodesh, the Holy Spirit. He is the servant of the Father (God), the One who selects the Bride, the One who calls men to Yeshua, the One who convicts of sin and gives us the power to serve our King. He knocks on the door of our heart, calling us to draw near to our Messiah. He carries a hammer as well: the Word of God. *"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"* (Jeremiah 23:29) May we be sensitive to the call of the Spirit, and allow the hammer of God's Word to break up the stony places in our hearts this month – beginning today.

Awake, spiritual leaders!

There is an interesting verse in Judges 5:12 that applies to us today: *"Awake, awake Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, and lead your captives away, thou son of Abinoam."* Deborah was an anointed leader in Israel during a time when Israel had rebelled against the Lord. God had delivered His people into the hands of Jabin, king of Canaan, who harshly oppressed the children of Israel for twenty years. Deborah was a prophetess, a judge and a "mother in Israel." God's people came to her for judgment under the "palm tree of Deborah" (Judges 4). Barak was also a leader in Israel who told Deborah that he was willing to go up against Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, if Deborah would go with him. Deborah responded: *"I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."* (Judges 4:9) It happened just as Deborah said. A hammer and a tent peg in the hands of a woman, Yael, became the death of Israel's enemy.

Deborah and Barak sang a victory song recorded in Judges 5:2: *"When leaders lead in Israel, when the people willingly offer themselves, Bless the Lord!"*

The victory in Israel that day resulted in forty years of rest in the land (Judges 5:31). Great things happen when leaders lead! God does mighty deeds when women step out and obey the Lord, using the gifts that God has given them. It can even be in the plan of God for a woman to direct a man in a given spiritual situation and for both of them, in submission to God, to see great victory.

What a blessing it is when strong male warriors know how to swallow their pride and humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. How beautiful it is when God's children willingly offer themselves, obeying the exhortation of Rabbi Saul in Romans 12:1: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

Has God called you to a leadership position in your home, on the job, in your community, in your congregation? Awake to renewed zeal in service. Stir up the gift that is within you! Awake to being a "servant leader" like Yeshua. Awake to leading with a song of praise on your lips to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Awake to humility, recognizing that in Messiah, there is neither male nor female. God will use whom He chooses to use. Awake, all leaders, to lead (rule) with diligence to the glory of God (Romans 12:8).

Awake, to God's dealings in your life

"Awake, o north wind, and come; thou south; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

What does this verse from the Song of Songs Chapter 4 verse 16 have to do with Elul? Much. It is the cry of the Bride Spirit that longs to know Yeshua in a deeper way, to experience both the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. The Shulamite maiden who cries "Awake" represents the individual believer, who like King David, wants God to search him, try him, see if there is any wicked way in him, and lead him in God's way (Ps. 139:23). She invites God to work in her life, even if there is pain involved. The final goals of being conformed to the image of God's Son, and pleasing the heart of God, are all that matter.

What is the north wind? The north wind in the land of Israel is generally associated with cold, thunder, lightning, rain and tempestuous storms while the south wind is a hot, dry wind. The Shulamite welcomes whatever wind it takes to let the fragrance of Messiah go forth from her. She is desperate for Him. She is a wise virgin who wants her lamp to be filled with oil. She wants to be awake when her bridegroom comes for her. Let the storms come if that's what it takes to be all that God has chosen her to be. Let the heat be turned up, if holy fire is necessary to purge away the dross in her life.

The second part of this invitation is much more pleasant, and a wonderful part of our preparation. *"Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits"* is the answer to the knock on the door of Revelation 3:20. It is an invitation to sweet fellowship with the Beloved. The bride is making herself available to her Bridegroom. She desires to please Him and longs to satisfy His heart. She recognizes that both the garden and the fruit are **His**. He is both the owner and the source of origin.

Welcome and embrace the storms and the heat in your life, knowing that our loving God desires to do you good in the end. Invite the Messiah to have intimate fellowship with you this month. He is waiting, and longing, for you. He is coming soon, perhaps this Feast of Trumpets. The Hebrew letters of Elul are appropriately an acronym for: *"Ani l'dodi v'dodi li."* (*"I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine."* Song of Songs 6:3) (A beautiful t-shirt with a rose and "Ani l'dodi v'dodi li" is

available on our website: www.jewishjewels.org.

Awake, O Israel

"Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the Lord, the cup of His fury..." (Isaiah 51:17)

"Awake, awake! Put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city!... Shake yourself from the dust, arise..." (Isaiah 52:1,2)

Most of you are familiar with the song that begins "Awake O Israel, put off your slumber and the truth shall set you free..." That is the heart's cry of the Lord at this difficult time in Israel's history. Israel must awake – from spiritual slumber to spiritual life in the Messiah Yeshua. Our calling is to go into all the communities of Jewish people (as the Lord opens the doors) and knock on the spiritual windows and doors with the hammer of God's word (the truth) at this midnight hour. The church also needs to awake to God's plan for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel, and, where necessary, repent of anti-semitism and false doctrines such as replacement theology. If we are the *shammash*, then you as our helpers, are the children with the strings hanging out the windows. As the Holy Spirit tugs at the strings of your heart, will you arise and help us wake up the Jewish people and the sleeping church?

We pray that your answer is YES!

Together, we are touching lives for YESHUA!

We bless you in His Holy name,

Neil and Jamie