



Shalom Shalom in Yeshua,

Elul: A Month of Preparation

The entire month prior to the fall Feasts of the Lord mentioned in Leviticus 23 is a month traditionally set aside for spiritual preparation. *Elul*, this special 6th month on the Jewish calendar, begins this year on the evening of September 4th and ends on the eve of October 3rd (*Erev Yom Teruah, Rosh HaShanah*).

The shofar is sounded on a daily basis during *Elul*, calling God's people to prayer and *t'shuvah* (repentance). *Elul* is a time for introspection, for asking forgiveness for wrongs committed against family, friends and neighbors, (knowingly or unknowingly). It is a time of spiritual cleansing and humility.

This year, we hear the voice of God as a shofar telling us that He wants our **Jewish Jewels** family not only to pray and repent, but also to **fast**. The words of the prophet Joel have pierced our hearts:

"Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; Wail, you who minister before the altar; Come, lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to my God... Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry out to the LORD." (Joel 1:13-14)

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand..." (Joel 2:1)

We believe that it is time to humble ourselves in fasting and prayer, not only for our own spiritual cleansing and relationships, but for God's purposes on the earth to be fulfilled – especially as they concern Israel and the Jewish people. This letter is being written before the August deadline concerning the "disengagement" from Gaza. By the time it is in your hands, the situation in Israel could be explosive.

Your intercession is needed now more than ever, for Israel, her people and our 2005 Mercy Mission mishpochah who leave on October 16 to comfort and bless God's people.

What is Fasting?

In his excellent little book, **Fasting**, Derek Prince defines fasting as "voluntary abstaining from food for spiritual purposes." The primary purpose of fasting is self-humbling. This scriptural means of humbling ourselves before God is seen throughout the Holy Scriptures. God does not make us humble; we must humble ourselves. King David fasted for this reason: *"I humbled my soul with fasting."* Psalm 35:13 Many examples of this spiritual discipline are found in the Tenach. For example, the fast that Ezra proclaimed by the river Ahava (love) so that he and his

fellow Israelites might humble themselves before God and ask Him for a safe journey back to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile (Ezra 8:21-23). (God honored their fast and answered their prayers.)

Fasting was required of all Israel under the first covenant. On the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement (*Yom HaKippurim*), God's people were commanded to afflict (humble) their souls through fasting, *"For it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you shall be clean from all your sins before the Lord"* (Leviticus 16:30 NAS). Anyone who did not fast on the Day of Atonement was to be cut off from the Jewish people.

A Fabulous Fast in the Tenach

There are many examples of fasts throughout the Holy Scriptures. One that has special significance for our day is the fast proclaimed by Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20. Israel's longtime enemies were about to come against God's people. The Bible tells us that King Jehoshaphat's response was to seek the Lord and proclaim a fast throughout all Judah (2 Chronicles 20:3). *"So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord."* (2 Chronicles 20:4) Jehoshaphat stood in the house of the Lord and prayed: *"Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?"* (2 Chronicles 20:7) *"O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us, nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."* (2 Chronicles 20:12)

Collective fasting and prayer moved the heart and hand of God and He responded by speaking through a Levite named Jahaziel: *"Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's."* (2 Chronicles 20:15) *"You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem."* (2 Chronicles 20:17)

Fasting, coupled with prayer is powerful! God does battle for His people! After God spoke, Jehoshaphat, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem worshipped the Lord, believed His word, went forward singing and praising the Lord – and the Lord set ambushes against their enemies and defeated them. As if that weren't enough, the men of Judah found precious jewels on the dead bodies of their enemies – love tokens that God had left for them. There were more jewels and valuables than God's people could carry away. (It took them three days to gather it all.) They went to the Valley of B'rachah (blessing), blessed the Lord and returned home with great joy.

If we, like Jehosophat, would acknowledge our desperate need of God, fast (even collectively at times), seek the Lord, pray, remind Him of His covenant with us, and stand still while God works, we too would see miracles. Next to 2 Chronicles 20:15 in Jamie's Bible is the notation: Jonathan and Jesse 1/ 29/98. On that day Jamie was fasting and claimed that verse — "for the battle is not yours, but God's" for both our sons. Today, seven years later, we are living in the Valley of B'rachah (blessing), filled with the joy of seeing Jonathan and Jesse minister for the Lord in deed, in word and with stringed instruments. (2 Chronicles 20:28). We believe that years of fasting every Thursday for their spiritual growth, and trusting God to do what only He can do, brought them into the fullness of the Lord's plan for their lives.

Fast and pray for your loved ones. The battle is not yours, but God's. Nothing is impossible for Him.

Fasting in Judaism Today

There are two major fast days in Judaism today, *Tisha B'Av* and *Yom Kippur*, and four minor fast days. The minor fast days include the Tenth of Tevet (the beginning of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem), the Fast of Esther (13th day of Adar), the seventeenth of Tammuz (first breach in the walls of Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege), and the Fast of Gedaliah (3rd of Tishrei, the assassination of a Governor of the Jews, the final blow to the First Commonwealth). The minor fast days are observed from dawn to nightfall.

Tisha B'Av (the 9th of Av) is considered the saddest and most tragic day of the Jewish year. It is a day of fasting and mourning for the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. Both were destroyed on the exact same day, one in 586 BC by the Babylonians, the other in 70 AD by the Romans. In addition, on the 9th of Av in the year 1492, the decree ordering the expulsion of all Jews from Spain was issued. As a day of total fasting, no food or drink is permitted from before sundown on the 8th of Av until nightfall on the following day. Men abstain from shaving. Women don't wear cosmetics. Washing or bathing for pleasure or personal comfort is not allowed. Sexual relations are prohibited as is the studying of Torah — because it gladdens the heart (exceptions: Lamentations, Job and parts of Jeremiah).

The fast of *Yom Kippur* is more widely practiced and is considered the most sacred fast in Judaism. It is even called "The Fast" in Acts 27:9! It's a total fast (no food or water) for approximately 24 hours. Children under the age of 9 are not permitted to fast. Those twelve (girls), thirteen (boys) and older must fast as any adult. The sick are permitted to limit their fasting as they are able, i.e. a partial fast.

Fasting on *Yom Kippur* has replaced the blood sacrifice that was offered yearly by the *Cohen Gadol* (High Priest) for the atonement of sin. However, at no time did God change the rules. The Lord makes it clear that without the shedding of blood, there is no atonement for sin (Leviticus 17:11). *Yeshua*, Jesus, was the final sacrifice for sin. His blood is the blood of atonement. Messianic believers fast on *Yom Kippur* not for their own atonement since they already have it through *Yeshua*. We fast for the rest of Israel that they might see *Yeshua* as their *Cohen Gadol*.

Yeshua and Fasting

We read in Matthew chapter 4 that *Yeshua* the Messiah began His ministry with a forty-day fast. Following His immersion in the Jordan River, when the *Ruach HaKodesh* descended upon Him like a dove, He was filled with the *Ruach* (Luke 4:4) and led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He emerged victorious and returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14) —**filled** with the *Ruach* before the fast—**empowered** by the Spirit after it.

The Holy Spirit leads us to fast. As we fast, He gives us victory over the temptations of the flesh (habits, bondages). Then we are empowered to live a holy life. There **is** a solution for bondage to the flesh. *Yeshua* said it: "*However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.*" (Matthew 17:21)

Yeshua fasted—so should his *talmidim* (disciples). In Matthew chapter 6 *Yeshua* made this very clear in three parallel statements: "...when you do a charitable deed..." (vs. 2) "...when you pray..." (vs. 5), and "...when you fast..." (vs. 16). Not **if** you fast, but **when** you fast. Fasting is to be as much a part of a believer's life as giving and praying. *Yeshua* knew first hand the great value of denying the physical to devote oneself entirely to the spiritual. He wanted His disciples to move from the natural to the supernatural. *Yeshua* wants to help all of us bring the old, carnal

nature that opposes the *Ruach* within us into subjection through fasting. By His grace, and through His power, our **spirit** rather than our **flesh** can be our master! As Derek Prince says in his powerful little book on fasting: "When you fast, you serve notice on your body and your carnal nature: 'You don't control me. I'm not subject to you. You're my servant. You'll obey what the Spirit of God in me declares I have to do'."

Yeshua told His disciples that the days would come when the "bridegroom" (Yeshua) would be taken away from them and that they would fast in those days. We, His bride, are living in those days. In traditional Judaism, a bride fasts on her wedding day in preparation for the glorious union with her beloved. Bride of Messiah: consider fasting as you prepare your heart for the coming of the Bridegroom!

Types of Fasts

God is a gracious God! He knows that fasting is very difficult for many of us. He looks at the heart and, in our experience, honors our baby steps with fasting. We personally have never been very successful with an ordinary fast of no food, only water, due to our incredibly active life (with the exception of Yom Kippur, an only water fast). Most of our fasts have been either liquid fasts or "Daniel fasts." And yet, in spite of our feeble attempts, God has richly blessed our times of denying the flesh. In Daniel 10:2-3 we see that Daniel ate no "pleasant food" for three weeks as he interceded and wrestled in prayer for his Jewish people. During his 21 day fast, Daniel received only slight nourishment. The Hebrew word for "pleasant" used in Daniel 10:3 is **חַמַּד** (*chamad*), a primary root that means delectable, goodly, lust or delight. If God leads you to begin a "Daniel fast," the *Ruach Hakodesh* will show you what that means for you as an individual. For us it means only fruits and vegetables and liquids. When our sons were little and Jamie fasted on Thursdays she drank liquids only, and usually ate a light dinner, unless the fast extended another day or two. This is not a big deal. No spiritual giants here!! The most important part of the fast is not the physical denial but the heart attitude.

Isaiah chapter 58 (the great fasting chapter of the Old Covenant) details both this heart attitude and the marvelous blessings that result from fasting. The right motives for fasting are listed in verses 6-12: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, to break yokes, to see the needs of others met etc. Not legalism. Not a religious ritual. Not a prideful exercise. Not fasting with a sad countenance so that others will know you're fasting. Fasting Yeshua's way: with anointed head, washed face, in the secret place with our Heavenly Father (Matthew 6:16-18). The blessings promised to those who practice God's "chosen fast" are phenomenal: healing, righteousness, freedom, answered prayer, the glory of the Lord, provision, guidance, restoration, spiritual refreshing, and generational fruitfulness. Wow. (Read Isaiah 58:8-12.)

Pray! — and ask the Lord to help you make fasting a part of your spiritual life this year. Consult your doctor before you begin if you have serious health issues. Begin slowly – in faith (Hebrews 11:6) - led by the *Ruach HaKodesh*. You can do all things through the Messiah who strengthens you (Phillippians 4:13)!

Fast and Pray for Israel

Fasting can impact the destiny of nations. Remember Ninevah? When the entire city, including its king and even its livestock fasted and called upon God, they were spared from destruction. Remember the Jews in ancient Persia? When Queen Esther, her maidens and all the Jews of Shushan fasted for three days (a **total** fast!) the entire Jewish nation was saved from annihilation

at the hands of the wicked Haman.

Now, more than ever, Israel needs our prayers undergirded by fasting. We have a book that will help you pray the Word of God on behalf of God's people and His Land. It is called **Seeking God** and will take the guess work out of intercession for you. Prayer #49 (of 125 prayers) is as follows: "Heavenly Father, I ask You to spare Your people, and give not Your heritage to reproach that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, where is their God?" Imagine the impact if the 14,879 people on the Jewish Jewels mailing list prayed this prayer collectively?! Let's do it and believe God for miracles during October's High Holy Days. (May we **see** the answer to your prayers as our 2005 Mercy Mission ministers in Israel during Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles.)

Praying (and fasting) for you and all Israel,

Neil and Jamie

P.S. Victory! The Alef-Bet programs are on the air as of September 4! See attached schedule.

P.S. Let's overwhelm the needy in Israel this Sukkot with gifts and blessings. Please give as the Spirit leads. God bless you!

A Powerful Package: Fasting (Derek Prince), **Seeking God** (V.W. Arnold) and "Knowing You" (Robert Stearns, The River Instrumental Series Volume I). Fast, turn on the CD, and pray for Israel. **GOD** will be your reward!