

It's important to note that every Hebrew year ends and begins the same way,
With a transition from the month of Elul to Tishri,
This includes a forty day period of returning to God and agreeing with His word and
commands.

The month of Elul includes the beautiful imagery of "the King is in the field".
Which is to say that God has drawn near to look closely at how you are tending the
fields (blessings and responsibilities) that He has given you.
Reading Isaiah 55 and Hosea 14 will provide a beautiful picture of how God responds to
our pursuit of Him.

Elul, is a time of paradox -- the Jewish calendar distinguishes between "mundane" and
"holy". Ordinary workdays are "mundane" portions of time; Sabbath and the festivals are
examples of "holy" time. On "holy" days, you disengage from labor to focus on the
spiritual.

Elul is a "holy" month when you assess the year gone by;
a time to prepare for the "Days of Awe" of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur by
repenting the failings of the past and resolving for the future -
But the days of Elul are workdays.
The activities of Elul are conducted amidst our workday lives at work.

The king's usual place is in the royal palace.
To approach the king you have to jump through a lot of hoops.
However, there are times when the king comes out to the fields outside the city.
At such times, anyone can approach him;
The peasant has as much access as the highest ranking minister in the royal court.
The field is the workplace or our daily lives.

Elul is when you are preparing to meet God for judgment -
But He comes to the field to be most approachable so we can truly know Him in His
mercy.

The activities required to build the tabernacle in the Bible were the same activities
forbidden on the Sabbath.

We are called to rest when we are with Him. Our obedience and our rest are His
dwelling place.

Sabbaths - Holy times are compared to a Lookout Tower, where we rise high above our
labor to see the purpose of the work from a higher perspective.

The exception to this rule is the month of Elul - when the king comes to the field. No one labors for the sake of labor. The king is the reason for the labor.

When we see the king in his field, do we keep working?
Do we behave as if this were just another day? Of course not.
We might still be in the field, but the field has become a holier place.
Likewise, we don't clean up to be in His presence - no -
we commune with Him in the field.

This is a time to be nurtured, to allow Him to fix what has been broken and to nurture us back into a place of health and prosperity.

There are some things that have been recorded in our life's history that are incorrect, because God has come and dealt with them.

There are accusations and condemnations that need to be removed and mistakes that need to be reconciled.

God wants to rewrite our story and change the way we see it.

Moses spent 40 days to receive the 10 commandments then smashed them by the golden calf.

After destroying the golden calf and judging the guilty, Moses went back up Mt. Sinai for 40 more days to intercede for the Israelites.

Moses came back to camp and one day later on Elul 1st God called him back up the mountain to receive the 2nd copy of the 10 commandments.

Moses came down the mountain on Yom Kippur with the new tablets.

So, the month of Elul (plus the first 10 days of Tishri in the New Year) is used for repentance in preparation of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

September 9th (evening of 8th) is first day of creation (Let there be light).

September 14th (evening of 13th) is creation of man on 6th day and Rosh Hashanah

Teshuvah - often translated as repentance but it's much bigger than that.

Shuv means to return or to turn back (to God and from evil).

Since God is the means by which we turn from evil, shuv is more about turning back to God with all of your heart, soul, and strength to change your direction or destiny.

[1 forsake the sin (agree with the Truth or saying the same thing); 2 regret the break in your relationship with God; 3 confess the truth and make amends; 4 accept forgiveness]

Hosea 14 Comfort Ye My people

O Israel, return to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity;

2 Take words with you, and return to the Lord. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.

3 Assyria shall not save us, we will not ride on horses, nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, 'You are our gods.' For in You the fatherless finds mercy."

4 "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him.

5 I will be like the dew to Israel; He shall grow like the lily, and lengthen his roots like Lebanon.

6 His branches shall spread; His beauty shall be like an olive tree, and his fragrance like Lebanon.

7 Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall be revived like grain, and grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

8 "Ephraim shall say, 'What have I to do anymore with idols?' I have heard and observed him. I am like a green cypress tree; your fruit is found in Me."

9 Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them.

For the ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them.

Isaiah 55

An Invitation to Abundant Life

"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread, and your wages for *what* does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.

³ Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you - the sure mercies of David.

⁴ Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and commander for the people.

⁵ Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, and nations *who* do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you."

⁶ Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.

⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to

the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

⁸ “For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the LORD.

⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater,

¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.

¹² “For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.

¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.”

The King is in the Field - Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Isaiah 55:6

5776 - Heaven and Earth

There has been much talk recently about the Shemittah, the Sabbatical Year to release debtors, and the 50 year Jubilee cycle. Will they impact the world economy and possibly unleash a "day of reckoning" as 5775 ends and the New Year opens? You don't have to be a prophet to recognize the precarious economic bubble America and the world sits in. And America's passion for immorality certainly deserves God's shaking. Is the time at hand, and either way how should we pray?

In America it's still four months to the New Year, but if you follow the biblical calendar, the Hebrew year of 5776 begins with Rosh Hashanah in just a few weeks. In nearly every book of the Bible God uses numbers and word-pictures as a story beneath the story and a thread that is woven from beginning to end. When we begin a New Year, we literally step onto a new path with opportunities and dilemmas for each of us to choose between.

Unlike the English language, biblical Hebrew numbers are also words and pictures, and to some degree stories. As an example of how numbers have a bearing on how God speaks to us, the Hebrew meaning of the number 70, in 5776, has to do with seeing. So we can discern that, in this decade, one of God's core purposes may be to change the way we see Him, ourselves, and our life or calling. Seventy also symbolizes perfection, completeness, and judgment. So it's also reasonable to assume that God is bringing His kingdom, His church, and His servants into order. One of His tools for doing that is judgment, but that doesn't mean it's the end of the world as we know it.

"For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." 1 Corinthians 11:31-32

It is likely that both of those aspects of judgment will be a significant aspect of the year ahead. If we are quick to humble ourselves we will experience deliverance through the events of life. If we ignore God, then Romans 1:28 will rule the day, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting."

The letter vav is the sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet and it's used as a connector. "In the beginning God created the heavens and [vav] the earth." Genesis 1:1 In scripture, "vav" is often used to connect heavenly things and earthly things. For instance, during the first five days of creation God made the physical world; on the 6th day He made

man. We could say that man was created to connect the physical with the spiritual in the service of God.

The number six in scripture symbolizes man (man was created on the sixth day - along with all other land animals). Six also represents human weakness, the evils of Satan, and the manifestation of sin. The serpent was one of the land animals created on the 6th day, so this year we should especially heed the advice of 1 Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." In the same way we know to plant certain crops at certain times of the year, so there are seasons when Satan is more predatory.

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:10

Notice there is no "or" in that verse because it is a progression of "ands". Satan steals and then he must kill the witness (not always physical death) and then he destroys all evidence. He does it in any area we surrender control to him.

Sometimes we are our worst enemy because we won't surrender to Jesus. "You wearied yourself by such going about, but you would not say, 'It is hopeless.' You found renewal of your strength, and so you did not faint." Isaiah 57:10

If we identify the true enemy and resist, he flees. "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded." James 4:6-8

Because the number six is all about man, we can expect conflict to be at the forefront in 5776. From the savagery of ISIS to violence in the streets of America there will a steady opportunity for good to triumph or evil to rage. Likewise, men are appointed six days to labor and then to rest. The focus of "labor" is on earthly concerns. This will be one of the most pressing issue. Will the worldly lead the way into darkness or will the church shine brightly to reveal God in all His glory?

"Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." Isaiah 60:1-3

As Christians who have Christ dwelling in us, 5776 should be filled with opportunities for heaven to touch earth. The real question is will we touch heaven or will our gaze remain on the pleasures of earth?