



Parsha Shoftim & The Month of Elul

Debarim 16:18 - 21:9

Beit Emet Congregation ~ Vancouver, WA

Ben Ehrhardt, Shamash

9/6/08

www.hearoisrael.org

This past Sunday (*Yom Rishon*), we witnessed "**Rosh Chodesh Elul**" or the beginning of the sixth month of the Hebrew year. *Rosh Chodesh Elul* occurs during **Parsha Shoftim**, the Torah portion titled "**Judges**". These two are tied together in a beautiful way. I believe that recent events underscore the need for all of us to pay close attention to these Scriptures, in this "**season**" of Torah. **Elul** is the month of preparation for us, as we are about to come before Yahweh and observe and celebrate His Fall Feasts. The focus of the entire month of Elul, like the time period between Yom HaBikkurim (*First-fruits*) and Shavu'ot (*Pentecost*), is on self examination and spiritual growth.

Elul is spelled "*Aleph-lamed-vav-lamed*". Now, some people have asked me, "*Isn't Elul, like many of the names of the months on the Hebrew calendar, a Babylonian word? What place does that name have in our beliefs?*" That's a *toiv* (good) question. The names of nine of the months were first used during the Babylonian captivity. However, these names, these words, are Aramaic. Aramaic was the language of the Babylonians. But, then again, it has been the language of numerous cultures, and for commerce, throughout the Middle East, over the millennia. At least some the Brit Chadasha, as well as the Book of Daniel, were originally written in Aramaic.

Now, Nehemyah recorded, in **Nehemyah 6:15**, that the rebuilding of the walls of Yerushalayim was completed on the 25th day of the month of **Elul**. **Elul** is Strong's #435 and means "**search**", as in to search one's heart or soul. If we look at the letters "*aleph-lamed-vav-lamed*" as numbers, they total 67. This equals the word "**zebach'im**" which is "**sacrifices**" or "**offerings**", as well as "**ya' chalah**" which means "**they shall be eaten**"; which refers to the portion or tithe of the "**offering**" or "**zebach**" that the priest is to eat. It also equals "**miz'be'akh**" or "**my altar**". And finally here, 67 equals "**Abidan**" or "**Father is Judge**"; which, we'll see in a bit, ties into this week's *parsha*.

Now, all of this helps us see the meaning in this month; and why **Elul** was so named. The month of **Elul** is referred to in Judaism as "**the month of repentance**," "**the month of mercy**" and "**the month of forgiveness**." **Elul** follows the two previous months of **Tamuz** and **Av**; more Aramaic names. These months correspond with the sins Yisra'el committed, that caused Yahweh to Judge them and exile them. According to the rabbis, Tamuz was so named to always remember the specific sin of idolatry committed by all Yisra'el throughout their wilderness journey and, later, in the Land. In the Aramaic; **Tamuz** literally means to "**see through**" or "**seek**". The next month, **Av**, means "**Father**". Together, they tell us "**seek Father**". We're "**seeking**" (**Tamuz**) and "**searching**" (**Elul**) for forgiveness from our **Father**, "**Av**" (remember "**Abidan**", "**Father is Judge**"). We're seeking through awareness of our sins and "**teshuva**" or "**repentance**". As we've learned before, the naming of

months during the Babylonian captivity, was done in order to remember events and lessons learned at these times in Yisra'el's history.

The four letters of the name **Elul** are an acronym for the initial letters of the phrase in **Shir haShirim / Song of Songs 6:3**; **"Ani L'dodi, V'dodi Li"** or **"I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me."** **"I am to my beloved"** is repentance and desire to return to relationship with my Creator. **"And my beloved is to me"** is the Divine expression of mercy and forgiveness. In esoteric Hebrew thought, the union of Yitzhak and Rivka symbolizes repentance, prayer and devotion to Yahweh on behalf of B'nei Yisra'el and Yahweh's love and mercy toward us, His people. The numerical value of Yitzhak's name is 208 plus Rivka's 307 = 515 = **tefilah**, "prayer." The verse **"I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me"** refers, in particular, to the service of prayer of the month of **Elul**.

An interesting side note here is that each of the four Hebrew words in the phrase **"I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me"** or **"Ani L'dodi, V'dodi Li"** end with the letter **"yud"**. Yud is the number **"ten"**. Added together, they equal 40, the number of **"teaching"**. Forty is also the number of days from Elul 1 to Yom Kippur. These are all days of self examination and hearing from Yahweh. It was at this time, according to Shemot / Exodus 34, that Moshe ascended Mount Sinai a third time for a period of forty days from **Rosh Chodesh Elul** to **Yom Kippur**. And, he came down with the second **"tablets of the covenant"** after the first pair were broken. It was during this third 40 days that Yahweh personally revealed Himself to Moshe. Remember Him "passing by" and showing Himself to Moshe. Remember how Moshe's was shining with the esteem of Yahweh as he came down from Sinai. Yahweh had re-written the Covenant on the tablets of stone and further showed Moshe the pattern of the Tabernacle. In fact, He showed Moshe the pattern of all that is in heaven. When you think about it, Yahweh showed Moshe the pattern of the Restoration of all things.

Because of the **"searching"** of our hearts and souls, the identification of sins we have committed and the **"teshuva"** and reparations that we make, **Elul** is the month of preparation for the Fall Feasts of **Tishrei**. **Tishrei** is the Aramaic word for and a permutation of the Hebrew word **"Reishit"** (as B'resheit) meaning **"beginning"**; hence, **Rosh Hashanah** or **"beginning (head) of the year"**. As the month progresses, we will look at the approach of **Yom Teruah** (*Day of Shouting or Feast of Trumpets*) along with **Yom Kippur** (*Day of Atonement*) and Sukkot (*Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles*).

"Teshuva" or **"repentance"** is a foundational doctrine of our faith as this scripture declares, however I believe it is rarely understood fully. We are told in **Acts 2:38**; **And Kepha said to them, "Repent, and let each one of you be immersed in the Name of Yahshua Messiah for the forgiveness of sins. And you shall receive the gift of the Set-apart Spirit."**

It is the first step for an unbeliever to repent. It is our first step, as believers, when we stumble. But what is Repentance? What does it mean to repent? Let's examine the scriptures. First of all, repentance must involve humility. Let's look at the example of Yoshiyahu (Josiah). **2 Melakim / Kings 22:16-20**; **"Thus said YHVH, 'See, I am bringing evil on this place and on its inhabitants, all the words of the book which the sovereign of Yehudah has read, because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other mighty ones to provoke Me with all the works of their hands. And so My wrath shall be kindled against this place and not be quenched.' "** **"And to the sovereign of Yehudah, who sent you to inquire of YHVH, say this to him, 'Thus said YHVH Elohim of Yisra'el, "As for the words which you have heard, because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before YHVH when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a ruin and a curse, and did tore your garments and wept before Me, I also have heard," declares YHVH. Therefore, see, I am gathering you to your**

fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, so that your eyes do not see all the evil I am bringing on this place.” ’ ”

In the example of Nineveh who repented at the teaching of Yonah, we see that repentance is accompanied by a commitment to change, to turn to righteousness and to cease from unrighteousness. **Yonah 3:1-10**; *And the word of YHVH came to Yonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I am speaking to you.” And Yonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of YHVH. Now Nineveh was a great city before Elohim, of three day’s journey. And Yonah began to go in to the city on the first day’s walk. And he cried out and said, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” And the men of Nineveh believed in Elohim, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. And the word reached the sovereign of Nineveh, so he arose from his throne and took off his robe, and covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes. And he proclaimed and said throughout Nineveh, “By decree of the sovereign and his nobles: No man or beast, herd or flock, shall taste whatever – let them not eat, let them not even drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and call mightily to Elohim. And let each one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows whether Elohim does turn and relent, and shall turn away from the heat of His displeasure, so that we do not perish?” And Elohim saw their works, that they turned from their evil way. And Elohim relented from the evil which He had said He would do to them, and He did not do it.*

Yahweh saw their works. He saw their humility and commitment to turn away from evil. And so, repentance is actually a '**work**'. The Hebrew word for this is "**teshuva**" and literally means to turn 180 degrees and walk the other way. But did Yahweh repent also? Consider for a moment that Yahweh has a certain standard of righteousness. When man goes '**against**' that standard of righteousness it is likened unto a man walking in the face of a mighty wind. But when one repents, he changes direction and goes with the wind that was at one time against him. In the case of Nineveh, Yahweh's planned destruction changed because *they* changed, not Yahweh. Yahweh does not change, His standard of righteousness, His Torah endures forever. Where we stand in relation to it will determine what happens to us.

Let's look at **Luke 18:10-14**; *“Two men went up to the Set-apart Place to pray – the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and began to pray with himself this way, ‘Elohim, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men, swindlers, unrighteous, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess.’ But the tax collector standing at a distance would not even raise his eyes to the heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘Elohim, show favour unto me, a sinner!’ I say to you, this man went down to his house declared right, rather than the other. For everyone who is exalting himself shall be humbled, and he who is humbling himself shall be exalted.”*

In our repentance, Yahweh requires humility and true sorrow for one's sins. But let it be clear that sorrow is not repentance. Some would say they are sorry for their sins but it produces nothing. True repentance starts with sorrow and produces good works and "**turning**". Sha'ul, when he wrote to the Corinthians in his first letter rejoiced to see their sorrow turn to true repentance. When he wrote them in his second letter, he stated in **2 Corinthians 7:8-11**; *For even if I made you sad with my letter, I do not regret it, though I did regret it. For I perceive that the same letter made you sad, even if for an hour. I now rejoice, not that you were made sad, but that you were saddened into repenting. For you were made sad according to Elohim, so that you suffered no loss from us. For sadness according to Elohim works repentance to deliverance, not to be regretted, but the*

sadness of the world works death. For see how you have been saddened according to Elohim – how much it worked out in you eagerness; indeed, clearing of yourselves; indeed, displeasure; indeed, fear; indeed, longing; indeed, ardor; indeed, righting of wrong! In every way you proved yourselves to be clear in the matter.

Yahweh promises us much if we will repent from sin and unrighteousness and turn to His Torah for reproof and instruction in righteousness.

Yeshayahu / Isaiah 55:7; *Let the wrong forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to YHVH, who has compassion on him, and to our Elohim, for He pardons much.*

Yirmeyahu / Jeremiah 3:12; *“Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, ‘Return, O backsliding Yisra’el,’ declares YHVH, ‘I shall not look on you in displeasure, for I am kind,’ declares YHVH, ‘and I do not bear a grudge forever.*”

Tehillim / Psalms 34:18; *YHVH is near to the broken-hearted, and saves those whose spirit is crushed.*

Tehillim 51:17; *The slaughterings of Elohim are a broken spirit, a heart broken and crushed, O Elohim, these You do not despise.*

Yeshayahu 66:1-2; *Thus said YHVH, “The heavens are My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is this house that you build for Me? And where is this place of My rest? And all these My hand have made, and all these that exist,” declares YHVH. “Yet to such a one I look: on him who is poor and bruised of spirit, and who trembles at My Word.*

Yo’el / Joel 2:13; *And tear your heart and not your garments, and turn back to YHVH your Elohim, for He shows favour and is compassionate, patient, and of great kindness, and He shall relent concerning the evil.*

Those that say that we are “**saved by faith**” are making two big mistakes. First, they are not “**saved**”. No one is saved yet. We are “**redeemed**” by the blood of Yahshua, if we believe and if that faith is accompanied by works of repentance, humility and commitment to change. Yahshua said in **Matt.10:22, 24:13 and Mark 13:13; *“But he who shall have endured to the end shall be saved.”*** All references to salvation through Yahshua are future tense, except for a couple of poor translations from the Greek in Acts. Also, it is false to teach that Sha’ul never believed in a working faith. **Acts 26:19-20 says; *“Therefore, Sovereign Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Yerushalayim, and in all the country of Yehudah, and to the gentiles, that they should repent, and turn to Elohim, and do works worthy of repentance.”***

While it is the truth to say that we are “**saved by grace**” it is also truth that we are saved by grace because we have “**repented**”. And we should continue to do works worthy of repentance. Now that we have established some meaning behind the word '**repent**', the question should be asked "What exactly are we supposed to be repenting of?"

Yehezqel / Ezekiel 18:20-23; *“The being who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the crookedness of the father, nor the father bear the crookedness of the son. The righteousness of the righteous is upon himself, and the wrongness of the wrong is upon himself. But the*

wrong, if he turns from all his sins which he has done, and he shall guard all My laws, and shall do rightruling and righteousness, he shall certainly live, he shall not die. All the transgressions which he has done shall not be remembered against him – in his righteousness that he has done, he shall live. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wrong?” declares the Master YHVH. “Is it not that he should turn from his ways, and live?”

Repentance certainly involves turning from our sins. But what is sin? What is righteousness? What do the scriptures say? The scriptures say that keeping the Torah is righteousness.

Debarim / Deuteronomy 6:25 says; *‘And it is righteousness for us when we guard to do all this command before YHVH our Elohim, as He has commanded us.’* Notice it says *“all this command”* not just a part of it here or there.

Tehillim 19:9; *The fear of YHVH is clean, standing forever; The right-rulings of YHVH are true, They are righteous altogether,*

His word is His law...His word is righteous.

Tehillim 119:123; *My eyes have pined away for Your deliverance, And for the word of Your righteousness.*

Tehillim 119:172; *My tongue sings of Your word, For all Your commands are righteousness.*

ALL His commandments...are righteousness.

Tehillim 119:160; *The sum of Your word is truth, And all Your righteous right-rulings are forever.*

It was true even in Yahshua’s day. But, can anyone walk in all of Yahweh’s commands? Look at the parents of Yochanan The Immerser (John the Baptist) in **Luke 1:5-6**; *There was in the days of Herodes, the sovereign of Yehudah, a certain priest named Zekaryah, of the division of Abiyah. And his wife was of the daughters of Aharon, and her name was Elisheva. And they were both righteous before Elohim, blamelessly walking in all the commands and righteousnesses of YHVH.*

Now, the scriptures teach that the opposite of righteousness is unrighteousness or sin.

In **Romans 6:15-16** Sha’ul says; *“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under Torah but under favor? Let it not be! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves servants for obedience, you are servants of the one whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness?”*

Here we see that sin and righteousness are opposites. Sin leads to death and obedience leads to righteousness. **1Timothy 1:8-11** gives us the purpose of the Torah; *And we know that the Torah is good if one uses it legitimately, knowing this: that Torah is not laid down for a righteous being, but for the lawless and unruly, for the wicked and for sinners, for the wrong-doers and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for those who whore, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and for whatever else that is contrary to sound teaching, according to the esteemed Good News of the blessed Elohim which was entrusted to me.* The purpose of the Torah is for the *“sinner”*.

This brings us to the question of what exactly is sin. Well, if obedience to the law is righteousness; transgression of the law is sin / unrighteousness. **1John 3:4-10** puts it this way; *Everyone doing sin also does lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Everyone staying in Him does not sin. Everyone sinning has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one lead you astray. The one doing righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. The one doing sin is of the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of Elohim was manifested: to destroy the works of the devil. Everyone having been born of Elohim does not sin, because His seed stays in him, and he is powerless to sin, because he has been born of Elohim. In this the children of Elohim and the children of the devil are manifest: Everyone not doing righteousness is not of Elohim, neither the one not loving his brother.*

Clearly transgression of the law (Torah) is sin... obedience to His Torah is righteousness Let's look at **verse 4** again: *Everyone doing sin also does lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.*

According to Strong's Greek lexicon, the word that is translated "**lawlessness**" here is "**Anomia**", From Strong's #459; "**illegality**", or, in "**violation of the law**" also "**wickedness**".

There is a fascinating word study that can be done here. I encourage you to get out your Strong's Concordance. If you don't have one, get one. Look up all the Scriptures of the Brit Chadashah that use the words lawless or lawlessness. This is tricky, as the enemy of your soul doesn't want you to see this. Now, in the "Scriptures" translation, "**lawless**" and "**lawlessness**" appear 69 times in the Brit Chadashah. But, in the KJV, for example, you'll find "**anomia**" or "**anomos**" under several words; like "**iniquity**", "**transgress the Law**", etc. You'll have to ferret it out. But, it's worth the study. Because, when you're done, you will understand the "**spirit of anti-messiah**".

So, all the scriptures that we see here tell us to repent, to turn away from sin, to live righteously. We should know that the very definition of living righteously is to live according to His Torah. But, have we not all failed and come short of the esteem of Yahweh? His Torah includes a provision for that also! It's called "**racham**" or "**mercy**". Yahweh is righteous; therefore He has to have mercy. Being merciful is a part of being righteous; and mercy is a part of His Torah.

Mattiyahu 23:23 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you tithe the mint and the anise and the cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the Torah: the right-ruling and the compassion and the belief. These need to have been done, without neglecting the others.*

The weightier matters of the Torah being judgment, mercy and faith. Not only is mercy a part of the Torah, but it is one of the "**weightier matters**". But did Yahshua condemn them in this verse for keeping the finer points? No, He said these ought to have been done, and not to leave the other undone! We also must practice mercy. But with some, (Yahweh knows who they are) mercy doesn't work because they don't care. **Yeshayahu 26:10**; *The wrong finds favor, yet he shall not learn righteousness; in the land of straightforwardness he acts perversely, and does not see the Excellency of YHVH.* They will continue to transgress His Torah, despite the mercy shown. We see many examples of this today. We hear plenty of messages from mainstream christianity telling us about His grace and mercy, but very few messages on repentance and living righteously by living according to His commandments! Some even go so far to say that His Torah is a burden or legalism and should not even be kept! This is s.a.tan's grand deception.

2 Thessalonians 2:7 states; *For the secret of lawlessness is already at work – only until he who now restrains comes out of the midst.* Some English translations, like the KJV use "*mystery of iniquity*" instead of "secret of lawlessness" in this verse. But, the term is? You guessed it, "*anomia*" violation/transgression of the Torah as in **1 Yochanan 3:4**; *Everyone doing sin also does lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.* Now, let's continue in **2 Thessalonians 2:8-12**; *And then the lawless one shall be revealed, whom the Master shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth and bring to naught with the manifestation of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and with all deceit of unrighteousness in those perishing, because they did not receive the love of the truth, in order for them to be saved. And for this reason Elohim sends them a working of delusion, for them to believe the falsehood, in order that all should be judged who did not believe the truth, but have delighted in the unrighteousness.*

If they loved not the truth; if instead they had pleasure in unrighteousness; and if unrighteousness is sin and sin is transgression of the Torah; then the fact remains that most people who accept the Messiah are not fully repenting. Yet many say, "*oh look at all the wonderful miracles that are done!*" How can all these people be deceived, do not the miracles testify that they are walking in righteousness and are accepted by Yahweh? Some are... but let's remember signs follow those who believe and let's not follow the signs. Yahshua tells us in **Mattiyahu 7:21-23**; *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Master, Master,' shall enter into the reign of the heavens, but he who is doing the desire of My Father in the heavens. Many shall say to Me in that day, 'Master, Master, have we not prophesied in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and done many mighty works in Your Name?' And then I shall declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from Me, you who work lawlessness!'* There is that word again, "*anomia*". Remember **Revelation 14:12** says; *Here is the endurance of the set-apart ones, here are those guarding the commands of Elohim and the belief of Yahshua.*

However, let us remember that we have not been perfect. Yahshua was and is perfect, therefore since we have sinned by transgressing the Torah (and we all have), it is through Yahshua that we are made righteous. We read in **Romans 5:18-19**; *So then, as through one trespass there resulted condemnation to all men, so also through one righteous act there resulted righteous-declaring of life to all men. For as through the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the One many shall be made righteous.*

Isn't this awesome? Yahweh not only gives us righteous commandments that teach us how to love one another and to love Him but He also has given us His Son who has redeemed us and washed away our "*lawlessness*" so that we are pure and blameless in His sight. Not only that, He gave us His Son to be our example of how to keep His commandments, so that we can remain pure and blameless before Yahweh our Maker. We no longer need to walk around in gloom for our past failures to live according to His law but now we are free.... free to do what ? Transgress His law again? As Sha'ul (Paul) says, "**Let it not be!**" Yet, that is what is taught by many and it is total falsehood. Is that not insulting His Spirit of grace?

Romans 6:15-16; *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under Torah but under favor? Let it not be! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves servants for obedience, you are servants of the one whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness?*

If we are truly His, we will learn the way of repentance. We will also be hungry and thirsting for righteousness and seeking to keep His commandments. We'll seek to bear fruit worthy of repentance.

When we see something in His Torah that we need to be doing, we need to get on our knees and repent right then and there! That is why Scripture tells us that King David was a man after Yahweh's own heart. He did not delay in repenting when he was shown his sin. Neither should we. Yahweh has promised to lead us in the path of righteousness when we seek.

Mattiyahu 6:33; *“But seek first the reign of Elohim, and His righteousness, and all these matters shall be added to you.”*

Mattiyahu 5:6; *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, because they shall be filled.”*

If we really desire to live according to the Spirit, we need to realize that Yahshua's words are Spirit. **Yochanan 6:63;** *“It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh does not profit at all. The words that I speak to you are Spirit and are life.”*

Yahshua is the Word (Torah), according to **Yochanan 1:1**. Anyone who says that **any** portion of the Torah (the Word) is “*done away with*” is saying that Yahshua is done away with. Sha'ul tells us that the Torah is spiritual in **Romans 7:14;** *For we know that the Torah is Spiritual, but I am fleshly, sold under sin.*

So, if His Torah is Spirit, let us not fail to live according to the Spirit. Let us learn to die to the flesh as in **Romans 8:5-8;** *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the matters of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the matters of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace. Because the mind of the flesh is enmity towards Elohim, for it does not subject itself to the Torah of Elohim, neither indeed is it able, and those who are in the flesh are unable to please Elohim.*

But satan has deceived the whole world into thinking that it is only the New Testament that defines what is right and what is wrong. A major problem with that is the New Testament was never even written when Kepha, Sha'ul, Barnabah, Yochanan, Ya'acov and all the other men of Yahweh were telling people to repent. Folks, in those days you couldn't just turn to the New Testament to understand what sin was. So what did they have to look at? Sha'ul said in **2Timothy 3:14-17;** *But you, stay in what you have learned and trusted, having known from whom you have learned, and that from a babe you have known the Set-apart Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for deliverance through belief in Messiah Yahshua. All Scripture is breathed by Elohim and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for setting straight, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of Elohim might be fitted, equipped for every good work.*

How clear can it be? The only scriptures they had in those days were the Torah, the Prophets (the Nevi'im) and the Writings (Ketuvim) which make up the **TaNak**. We see from the passage above, the Scriptures benefit us in seven different ways:

1. They make us wise for deliverance, because they testify of Moshiach.
2. They were breathed by Yahweh.
3. All scripture is profitable for teaching.
4. All scripture is profitable for reproof.
5. All scripture is profitable for correction (setting straight).
6. All scripture is profitable for instruction in righteousness.
7. Knowledge of scripture causes one to be fitted (perfected) and equipped for every good work.

What did Yahshua say about the TaNaK (the Torah and the Prophets)? In **Matthew 5:17-19** He said; ***“Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to complete. For truly, I say to you, till the heaven and the earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall by no means pass from the Torah till all be done. Whoever, then, breaks one of the least of these commands, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the reign of the heavens; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the reign of the heavens.”***

Therefore, let us seek diligently the commandments of Yahweh and walk according to the light He has given us. Don't let those who break even the least of the commandments and teach men so deceive us into following their example. The ultimate example given to us is Yahshua. He didn't fail to do even one jot or tittle of Yahweh's Torah. And when we do fail, do not forget the One who knows what we are going through; as **Ibrim / Hebrews 4:15** says; ***For we do not have a High Priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who was tried in all respects as we are, apart from sin. Baruch HaShem Yahweh!***

Like David, we can experience restoration and walking in righteousness. **Tehillim 23:3**; ***He turns back my being; He leads me in paths of righteousness For His Name's sake.*** The KJV says ***“He restoreth my soul.”*** Either way you read this, it clearly shows this concept of **“Teshuva”**, turning back to Yahweh. What's great here is that **Tehillim 23** tells us that it is Yahweh who turns us back to Him, if we desire and seek His Hand on us. If this kind of relationship with our Creator makes us legalists, I plead **“Guilty”**, and gladly so. I want to walk like Yahshua walked, because I love Him. I want Yahweh to say of me, ***“Ben is a man after My own Heart.”*** People may criticize and condemn you for this behavior. But, I challenge anyone to show me in Scripture where Yahweh, or Yahshua, ever condemned anyone for repenting and walking in righteousness.

Yahshua is the example, if He kept the Sabbath and you do not, **repent** and **keep it**. If He kept the feast days and you do not, **repent** and **keep them**. If He kept any of the commandments that you do not, by all means **repent** and **do them**....surely Yahweh will be with you, just as Yahshua said in **Yochanan / John 8:29**; ***“And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do what pleases Him.”*** He also said, in **Yochanan 14:23**; ***Yahshua answered him, “If anyone loves Me, he shall guard My Word. And My Father shall love him, and We shall come to him and make Our stay with him.”***

It is also at this season of the year that we need to look around us and repent to one another if we need to. **Bemidbar / Numbers 5:5-8** tells us; ***And YHVH spoke to Mosheh, saying, “Speak to the children of Yisra'el, ‘When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in trespass against YHVH, and that being is guilty, then they shall confess their sin which they have done. And he shall restore his guilt in its principal, plus one-fifth of it, and give it to whom he has been guilty. But if the man has no relative to restore the guilt to, the guilt which is restored goes to YHVH, for the priest, in addition to the ram of the atonement with which atonement is made for him.*** This is just one of several scriptures that clearly show us that if we sin against our brother or sister, it is a sin against Yahweh as well; and we need to repent and make it right.

Likewise, **Luke 17:3-4** shows us how to come to a brother we feel has sinned against us; ***“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day comes back to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.”*** We are not to posture ourselves or take-on an attitude of haughtiness here. We are to go to our brother with Scripture (the Word) and, in love, confront the situation and not let it fester.

Again, Yahshua is our model in this, as in all things. In **Mattiyahu 18:14-20** Yahshua says; *“Thus it is not the desire of your Father who is in the heavens that one of these little ones should be lost. And if your brother sins against you, go and reprove him, between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, say it to the assembly. And if he refuses even to hear the assembly, let him be to you like a gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind (forbid) on earth shall be having been bound in heaven, and whatever you loosen (permit) on earth shall be having been loosened in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning any matter that they ask, it shall be done for them by My Father in the heavens. For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there I am in their midst.”*

So, how does this all fit in with our *parsha*, “**Shoft'im**” or “**Judges**”? I thought I'd never ask. This has everything to do with **Elul** (*our searching*) and “**teshuva**”. **Shoftim** opens with **Debarim 16:18-20**; *“Appoint judges and officers within all your gates, which YHVH your Elohim is giving you, according to your tribes. And they shall judge the people with righteous rightruling. Do not distort right-ruling. Do not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. Follow righteousness, righteousness alone, so that you live and inherit the land which YHVH your Elohim is giving you.”* In the Hebrew Torah, this really reads, “**Shoft'im v'Shoter'im**” or literally “**Judges and Scribes**”. By the way, another word for “**Shof'tim**” is “**Pharisees**”. While Yahshua criticized some Pharisees and Scribes for being hypocrites; He never came against their “*office*”. It was He, Who ordained their office in Torah. And, in our *parsha*, gave the **Judges** (*Pharisees*) and **Scribes** (*Officers*) their instructions to carry our righteous judgments and right-rulings.

We are to “**give**” or “**natan**” *judges* (**Shoftim**) and *officers or scribes* (**shoter'im**) to settle disputes that arise among us that cannot be decided between those directly involved. This is how we are to bring righteous resolve to a situation. In doing this, according to the Hebrew, **verse 20** says; *“righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue....”* In our dealings with one another, we are to take great care to insure that we treat each other fairly, according to Torah.

Throughout this *parsha* we see instructions for and regarding these judges and magistrates, as well as the Priests and Levites and their roles in “**right-rulings**”. For today's *sidrah* (lesson) we read further in **Debarim 17:8-13**; *“When any matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, or between stroke and stroke – matters of strife within your gates – then you shall rise and go up to the place which YHVH your Elohim chooses, and shall come to the priests, the Lewites, and to the judge who is in those days, and shall inquire. And they shall declare to you the word of right-ruling, and you shall do according to the word which they declare to you from that place which YHVH chooses. And you shall guard to do according to all that they instruct you. Do according to the Torah in which they teach you, according to the rightruling which they say to you. You do not turn to the right or to the left from the word which they declare to you. And the man who acts arrogantly, so as not to listen to the priest who stands to serve there before YHVH your Elohim, or to the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Yisra'el. And let all the people hear and fear, and no longer do arrogantly.”*

This is the Torah precept that Yahshua was referring to in **Mattiyahu 18**. The “**assembly**” He was talking about in **verse 17**; *“And if he refuses to hear them, say it to the assembly. And if he refuses even to hear the assembly, let him be to you like a gentile and a tax collector,”* that assembly, was in His day the Sanhedrin, or the Great Assembly, the Priests and Scribes, as

prescribed by Torah. The word used in the Hebrew Mattityahu here for “**assembly**” is “**Qahal**” as in “**Qahal HaGadol**” or “**Great Assembly**”, as in the **70 Elders**, from **Bemidbar / Numbers 11**, that would later become the **Sanhedrin**. In other words these were to be judged by the “**leadership**”, or those chosen by and accountable to Yahweh, rather than the congregation (**ekklesia**), as taught in the church. The idea is to resolve any issue in righteousness and bring about “**teshuva**” and keep anger, division and hate out of our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Yahshua, in Yisra’el. The rabbis point out that it is better to be judged here, below, rather than judged by our ultimate Judge in Heaven. It is better to deal with conflicts within the Body of Messiah, Yisra’el, here and now; just as it is better to make “**teshuva**” with Elohim here on earth, while we still have that opportunity.

Ya’acob (James) gives us some perspective on this, as to how our hearts should be inclined.

Ya’acob 5:16; Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, so that you are healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous one accomplishes much.

As we go through this month of **Elul**, and approach **Yom Teruah**, during these forty days of introspection, on our journey to **Yom Kippur**, let us search our souls and seek a repentant heart and return (make **teshuva**) to the righteous path of Almighty Yahweh, our Creator, Father and our **Judge**. As we have discovered on this journey of ours, we learn lessons “**in season**”. Remember “**Tamuz~ Av**” or “**seek Father**”. As the prophet said in **Yeshayahu 55:6; Seek YHVH while He is to be found, call on Him while He is near**. Now is the season. Yahweh’s ear is inclined toward us. **Elul**, “**search**” yourself and seek His “**racham**”, His “**mercy**”. Let us also seek hearts to forgive and serve one another also, as Yahweh desires. Isn’t it our goal to be obedient out of our love for Elohim?

Let us seek to have a heart after Yahweh as David did, whom Yahweh loved. I want to close today with **Tehillim / Psalm 51:1-19; Show me favour, O Elohim, According to Your kindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me completely from my guilt, And cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against You, You alone, have I sinned, And done evil in Your eyes; That You might be proven right in Your words; Be clear when You judge. See, I was brought forth in crookedness, And in sin my mother conceived me. See, You have desired truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You make me know wisdom. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I am clean; Wash me, and I am whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness, Let the bones You have crushed rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my crookednesses. Create in me a clean heart, O Elohim, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Set-apart Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your deliverance, And uphold me, Noble Spirit! Let me teach transgressors Your ways, So that sinners turn back to You. Deliver me from blood-guilt, O Elohim, Elohim of my deliverance, Let my tongue sing aloud of Your righteousness. O YHVH open my lips, And that my mouth declare Your praise. For You do not desire slaughtering, or I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The slaughterings of Elohim are a broken spirit, A heart broken and crushed, O Elohim, These You do not despise. Do good in Your good pleasure to Tsiyon; Build the walls of Yerushalayim. Then You would delight in slaughterings of righteousness, In burnt offering and complete burnt offering; Then young bulls would be offered on Your altar.**

Baruch HaShem Yahweh