

— A SEASON OF *Teshuvah* —

40 DAYS

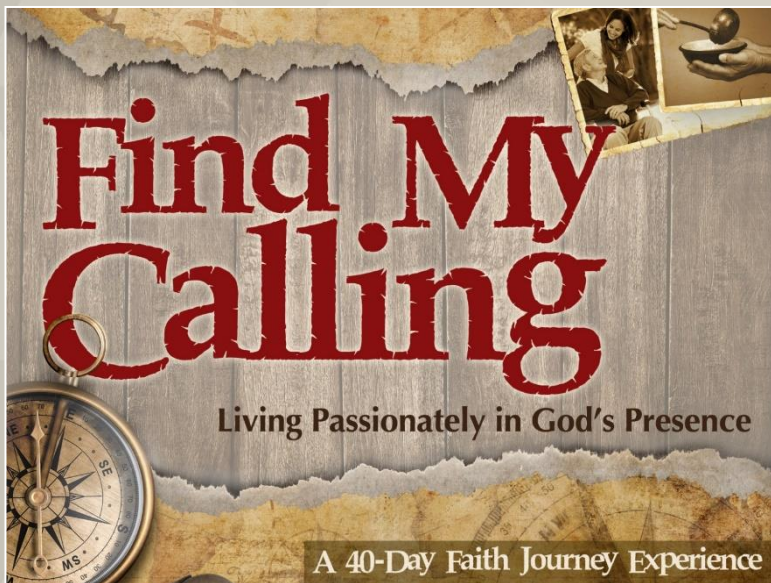
— RETURN TO ME —

REPENT. RETURN. ROOT.



JOEL 2:12-13





2014



2015



2016



2017



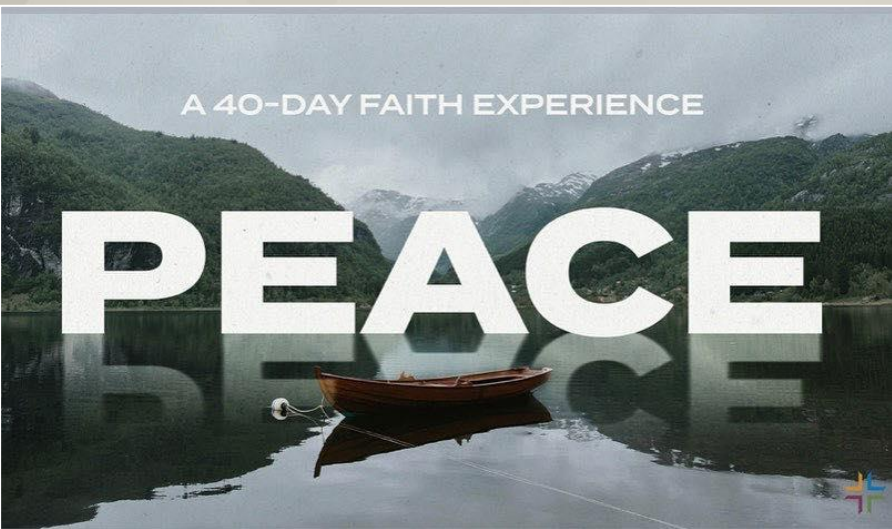
2018



2019



40 DAYS
RETURN TO ME



2020



2021



2022



2023



2024



2025



40 DAYS
RETURN TO ME

Why 40 Days?

The number “forty” + (a time period) is mentioned at least 146 times in Scripture. The phrase “40 days and 40 nights” appears 24 times.

It symbolizes trials or the fulfillment of promises.

It’s a number associated with testing and the hardships one must endure to become more spiritually aware.

<http://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/40.html> <https://guideposts.org/angels-and-miracles/miracles/gods-grace/the-number-40-in-the-bible/>



The Number 40 in the Bible

- The rains fell in Noah's day for **40** days and nights (Genesis 7:4)
- Israel ate manna and wandered in the wilderness for **40** years (Exodus 16:35)
- Moses was with God on the mountain, **40** days and nights, without eating bread or water (Exodus 24:18, 34:28)
- The spies searched the land of Canaan for **40** days (Numbers 13:25)
- God allowed the land to rest for **40** years (Judges 3:11, 5:31, 8:28)
- Abdon, a judge in Israel, had **40** sons (Judges 12:14)
- Israel did evil; God gave them to an enemy for **40** years (Judges 13:1)
- Eli judged Israel for **40** years (1 Samuel 4:18)
- Goliath cursed Israel and God for **40** days (1 Samuel 17:16)
- Saul reigned for **40** years (Acts 13:21)
- Ishbosheth (Saul's son) was **40** years old when he began to reign (2 Samuel 2:10)



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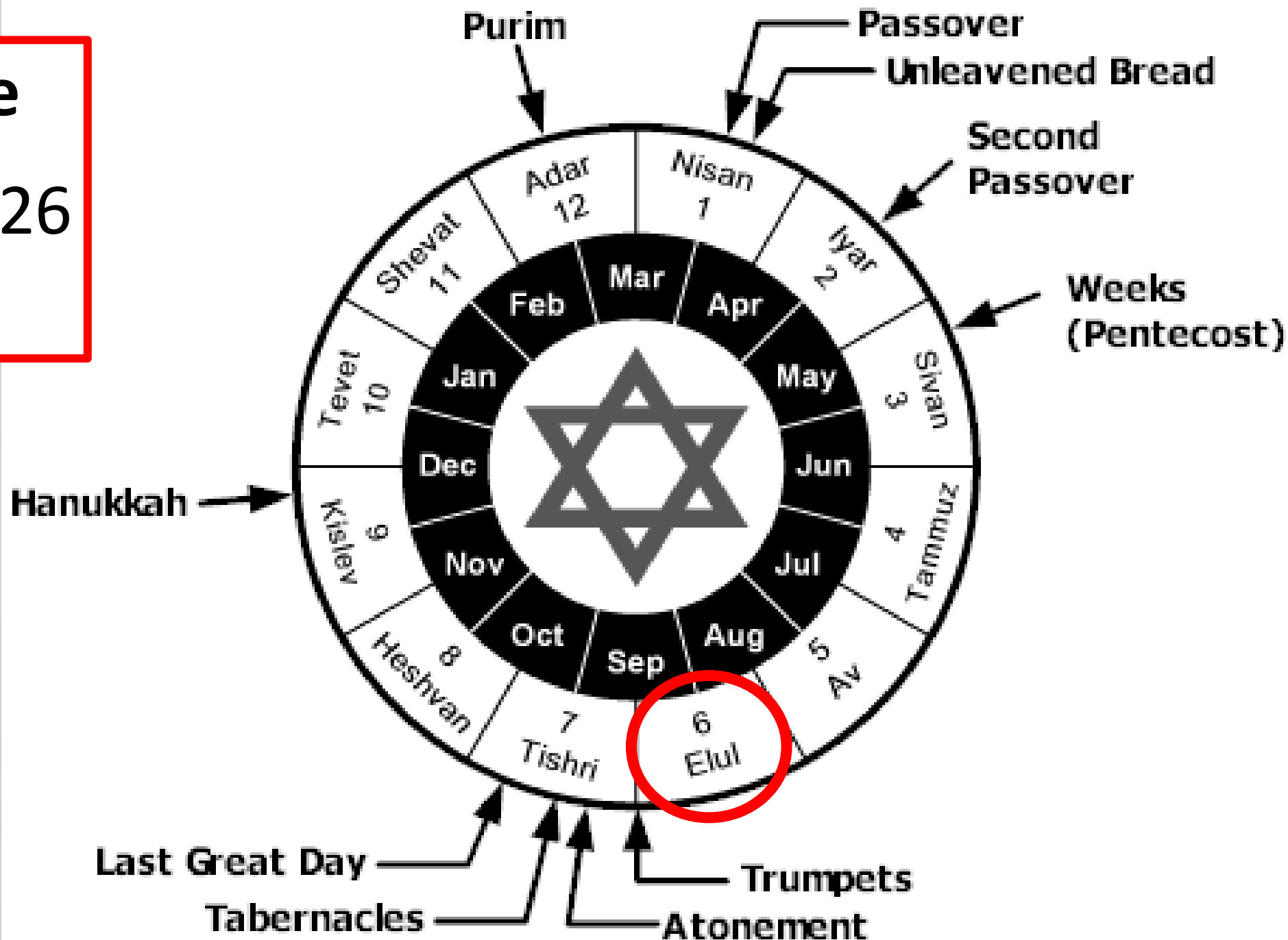
- David reigned over Israel for **40** years (2 Samuel 5:4, 1 Kings 2:11)
- Solomon reigned the same length as his father, **40** years (1 Kings 11:42)
- The holy place of the temple was **40** cubits long (1 Kings 6:17)
- Elijah had one meal that gave him strength for **40** days (1 Kings 19:8)
- Ezekiel bore the iniquity of the house of Judah for **40** days (Ezekiel 4:6)
- Joash reigned **40** years in Jerusalem (2 Kings 12:1)
- Egypt to be laid desolate for **40** years (Ezekiel 29:11-12)
- God gave Nineveh **40** days to repent (Jonah 3:4)
- Jesus fasted **40** days and nights (Matthew 4:2)
- Jesus was tempted for **40** days (Luke 4:2, Mark 1:13)
- Jesus remained on earth **40** days after the resurrection (Acts 1:3)



Today's date

August 16, 2026

3 Elul 5786



40 DAYS
RETURN TO ME

Elul is the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar and is traditionally viewed as a season of preparation, reflection, repentance, reconciliation, and drawing near to God.

One of the most beautiful associations with Elul comes from Song of Solomon 6:3: “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.” **אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי Ani l'dodi v'l'dodi li** The first letters of these words spell **אלול Elul**. Because of this, Elul has traditionally been understood as a season of drawing near to the Beloved.

At its heart, Elul is about *teshuvah*—turning, returning, and coming back to God. It is a time to examine our hearts, recognize where we have drifted, make things right where necessary, and realign ourselves with God before entering the sacred days ahead. Elul is not simply about feeling regret over the past. It is about returning to the right direction.

It is a season to: Reflect. Repent. Reconcile. Realign. Return. Renew.

The invitation is not simply, “Look at what you’ve done wrong.” It is: Come back. Draw near. Turn your heart toward Me. Let Me restore what has become distant.



Elul, the 6th month of the Hebrew calendar, is an intense month of spiritual preparation and self accounting in preparation for standing before the Lord on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The journey of *teshuvah* - of return - to our true selves and to the Lord our Creator, is a journey built on honesty and integrity and a burning desire to become the person God intended us to be.

Every new day of the month of Elul is announced by the sounding of the *shofar* - the ancient wake up call that touches our soul and rekindles our belief in ourselves and our ability to repair who we are. The month of Elul is a gift to all who are ready to bear down and get to work.

- Temple Institute



Sound the shofar

Traditionally, the shofar is sounded throughout Elul as a spiritual wake-up call. It is a reminder to awaken, pay attention, examine the heart, and prepare for the coming days. The sound of the shofar calls us out of spiritual complacency and reminds us that a sacred season is approaching. It is an invitation to stop, listen, and turn our attention back toward God.

- Kelly Letner



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Sound the shofar

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JSnXmFq8lM>



What was the first sermon of Yeshua/Jesus?



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From that time Jesus began to preach and say,
“**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand [has come near].” Matthew 4:17

* Greek verb μετανοέω *metanoëo* means “to change one’s mind”



**What was the first
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Book of Joel



40 DAYS
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The economic condition in Israel during the time of the prophet Joel was an **absolute economic catastrophe and complete societal collapse**. Ancient Israel was entirely an agrarian economy, meaning their wealth and survival relied almost fully on farming, crops, and livestock.



Dimensions of the Economic Collapse

- **Agricultural Ruin:** Successive waves of swarming locusts stripped the land completely bare. They destroyed staple crops like wheat and barley, as well as high-value trade commodities like grapevines, olives, fig trees.
- **Skyrocketing Food Prices:** Because the fields were ruined and future seed shriveled up in the dirt, severe famine set in. Food supplies vanished, causing food prices to soar and reducing the population to a state of desperate subsistence living.
- **Livestock Starvation:** The drought dried up natural streams, and the locusts devoured the pastures. With no water or grass, cattle, sheep, and goats starved, wiping out the meat, milk, wool, and leather industries.
- **Total Market Shutdown:** The collapse of farming meant people had nothing left to buy, sell, or trade. Currency and wealth became practically meaningless because the marketplace was empty.
- **Religious & Civic Disruption:** The economy was so depleted that the people could no longer even afford the mandatory grain, wine, and oil offerings for the Temple. This signaled that the nation's spiritual and civic lifeline was broken.



The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:
Hear [שָׁמַע *shema*] this, O elders, and **listen**, all inhabitants
of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days or
in your fathers' days? Tell your sons about it, and let your
sons tell their sons, and their sons the next generation.
What the gnawing locust [*gāzām*] has left, the swarming
locust [*arbeh*] has eaten; and what the swarming locust has
left, the creeping locust [*yaleq*] has eaten; and what the
creeping locust has left, the stripping locust [*ḥāsîl*] has
eaten. Joel 1:1-4





Imagine a nation facing economic hardships, inflation, food shortages, loss of jobs, a sense of collective despair, and fears of hardship for the next generation.

What should the people do?



The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the Lord. The priests mourn, the ministers of the Lord. The field is ruined [by the locusts], the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine dries up, fresh oil fails. Be ashamed, O farmers, wail, O vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley; because the harvest of the field is destroyed. The vine [of grapes] dries up and the fig tree fails; the pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree, all the trees of the field dry up. Indeed, rejoicing dries up from the sons of men. **Gird yourselves with sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar! Come, spend the night in sackcloth O ministers of my God, for the grain offering and the drink offering are withheld from the house of your God.** Joel 1:9-13

- The destruction of the crops (grain, grapes, and olive oil, v. 10; cf. Hosea 2:22) had left the priests who served in the house of the Lord without the essentials for the daily grain offerings (*minhâh*), which included flour and oil (Numbers 28:5), and drink offerings (*nesek*), which included wine (Exodus 29:40; Numbers 28:7). – Bible Knowledge Commentary



Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly
(literally... “a stoppage of work”); gather the elders and
all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord
your God, and **cry out to the Lord.**

Joel 1:14

* To experience spiritual renewal, we must change our
focus from the earthly to the heavenly.



Blow a trumpet (שׁוֹפָר *shofar*... ram's horn) in Zion, and
sound an alarm on My holy mountain [Temple Mount]!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of
the Lord is coming...

Joel 2:1

* The “Day of the Lord” is the Biblical term describing the
culmination of the last days of world history as we have known it —
specifically, it refers to the actual, physical, literal Second Coming of the
Lord Jesus Christ. – Joel Rosenberg



40 DAYS
RETURN TO ME

“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “**Return**
[שׁוּב *shuv*] to Me with all your heart, and with
fasting, weeping and mourning” Joel 2:12

*What are the actions of *teshuvah*?

- Fasting
- Weeping
- Mourning



The Hebrew word **שׁוּב** *shuv* carries the meaning of turning back, returning, reversing direction, and coming back to a previous place or condition.

Biblical repentance is much larger than regret. Regret can look backward and grieve what has happened. *Shuv* looks backward long enough to recognize where the road changed and then turns the feet toward home.

There are seasons when we know something is wrong because we feel sorrow. We know something has been lost because we feel the ache of it. We know we have wandered because we remember what it felt like to be close. Yet sorrow alone does not constitute return. A person can grieve a distance from the Lord while continuing to walk in the same direction. A person can recognize compromise while continuing to protect it. A person can confess that first love has weakened while continuing to live as though nothing needs to change.

Yahweh's invitation is stronger than sorrow. "Return to Me." The destination of repentance is not a better version of ourselves. The destination is Yeshua Himself.



“and rend your heart and not your garments.
Now **return** [שׁוּב *shuv*] to the Lord your God,
for He is gracious and compassionate, slow
to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and
relenting of evil.” Joel 2:13



Yahweh is not asking for an outward display while the heart remains untouched. He is calling for the heart. Elul will not allow us to hide behind spiritual activity while our direction remains unchanged. We can increase our activity while decreasing our intimacy. We can speak about the Bride while resisting the Bridegroom's correction. We can recognize that we have wandered and still refuse to turn. **Return requires movement.** The Bride is not called to spend this month staring backward in regret. She looks back long enough to discern where the road changed, then turns her face toward the Bridegroom.

“Let us search out and examine our ways and turn back to Yahweh.”
Lamentations 3:40.

Search. Examine. Return. These are action words. The search, the examination, and the returning have a destination: Yahweh. This is why repentance is not humiliation. It is a covenant response. The One calling you back is the One who still calls you His own.

- Christie Williams



40 DAYS
RETURN TO ME

What kind of God is calling us to Return [שוב *shuv*]?

- Gracious
- Compassionate (merciful)
- Slow to anger
- Abounding in lovingkindness (rich in faithful love)
- Relenting of evil (sending disaster)



What prevents us from Returning to God?

- Distractions (social media, technology, entertainment)
- Constant activity/busyness
- Sin
- Pride
- Hurt
- Anger
- Misunderstanding His grace



“Who knows whether He will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind Him, even a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?” Joel 2:14

- The words “who knows” testify to the Lord’s sovereignty in the matter (cf. 2 Samuel; 12:22; Jonah 3:9). Even if sinful Israel repented, she could not presume on God’s mercy as if it were something under their control which He had to grant automatically. They could only hope that He would turn and have pity (cf. Malachi 3:7) by averting the disaster (cf. Joel 2:20) and restoring their crops (cf. v. 25). Agricultural blessing would mark a reversal of the curse that had come on them (in the form of the locusts; cf. Deuteronomy 28:38–42) and would make it possible for grain ... and drink offerings to be presented again (cf. Joel 1:9, 13).

– Bible Knowledge Commentary



40 DAYS
RETURN TO ME

“Blow a trumpet [*shofar*] in Zion, **consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly**, gather the **people**, sanctify the **congregation**, assemble the **elders**, gather the **children** and the nursing **infants**. Let the **bridegroom** come out of his room and the **bride** out of her bridal chamber. Let the **priests**, the Lord’s ministers, weep between the porch and the altar [in the Temple], and let them say, “**Spare Your people, O Lord, and do not make Your inheritance a reproach**, a byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, ‘Where is their God?’ ” Joel 2:15-17



Then the Lord will be zealous for His land and will have pity on His people. The Lord will answer and say to His people, “Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil, and you will be satisfied in full with them; and I will never again make you a reproach among the nations. But I will remove the northern army far from you, and I will drive it into a parched and desolate land, and its vanguard into the eastern sea [Dead Sea], and its rear guard into the western sea [Mediterranean Sea]. And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up, for it has done great things.” Joel 2:18-20

- Joel’s prophecies pertaining to his own generation are merged here with those that await future realization. This is common in Old Testament prophecies (e.g., Isaiah 9:6–7; 61:1–2; Zechariah 9:9–10). – Bible Knowledge Commentary



“Do not fear, O land, rejoice and be glad, for the Lord has done great things. Do not fear, beasts of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, for the tree has borne its fruit, the fig tree and the vine have yielded in full. So rejoice, O sons of Zion, and be glad in the Lord your God; for He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, the early and latter rain as before.” Joel 2:21-23



“The threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil. Then **I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten**, the creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust, My great army which I sent among you. **You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you; then My people will never be put to shame.**” Joel 2:24-27

- What might happen if we as individuals and we as a society would repent?



“It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.” Joel 2:28-31

***Blessing Follows Obedience**



40 DAYS
RETURN TO ME

“I will display wonders in the sky” Joel 2:30

- On Wednesday evening of this past week... on August 12, 2026 (the day before 1 Elul), a rare **six-planet morning parade** (Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, Uranus, Saturn, and Neptune) converged with a **total solar eclipse** and the peak of the **Perseid meteor shower**.
- This precise triple event **has never occurred before in recorded scientific history**.
- In the Hebrew calendar, this major cosmic alignment coincided precisely with the transition into **Elul**, the profound month of spiritual reflection, repentance, and preparation for the High Holidays.



“And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered [saved]; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.” Joel 2:32

- For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Romans 10:11-13



Why do so many people refuse to repent and turn back to God?

- Some think it is too late to return.
- Some think it is futile to return because they have tried before and failed.
- Some think it is no use to come back because God is through with them.

Joel explains three great truths:

- It is never too late to turn around and turn back to God
- True repentance is an internal transformation, not a superficial external change
- Restoration is possible because of the gracious character of God



An Elul Invitation

Perhaps this month we simply ask the Savior:

Search me. Where have I drifted?

Teach me. Where have I listened to culture more than Your Word?

Forgive me. Where do I need to repent?

Awaken me. Where have I become spiritually complacent?

Use me. How can I faithfully serve You in this generation?

-Why Stand With Israel



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