

The Forty Days of Teshuva and Ten Days of Awe

The Forty Days of Teshuva Holiday

Description: The forty days of Teshuva are days of repentance, reflection, and restitution.

Date Of Holiday: 1st Day of 6th Month (Elul – August / September)

Key Scriptures: Joel 2:13, Ezekiel 14:6, 2 Peter 3:9 – “Tear your heart . . . and **turn** to Yahweh, your God; for he is gracious and merciful.”

Key Word: Repentance, Turn Away, Return

Actions: Admit wrong doings and past shortcomings, renounce them, and make a firm resolution to change in the future. Teshuva requires restitution to the wronged party and a promise not to repeat the offense. Make every effort to return to an un-fallen or sinless state.

Fulfillment: Fulfillment happens at Yom Teruah, when the names are written in the Books Of Judgments And Of Life.

Joel 2:13 – “Tear your heart . . . and **turn** to Yahweh, your God; for he is gracious and merciful.”

Ezekiel 14:6 – “Thus says Yahweh, ‘Repent, **turn away** from your idols and **turn away** from all your abominations’.”

2 Peter 3:9 – “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

Elul 1 is the day to begin turning back! Admit wrong doings and past shortcomings, renounce them, and make a firm resolution to change in the future. Teshuva requires restitution to the wronged party and a promise not to repeat the offense. Make every effort to return to an un-fallen or sinless state.

The words translated “turn” and “turn away” are the Hebrew word, shūv [H7725 שׁוּב]. Teshuvah comes from the word shūvah, [H7729 שׁוּבָה], which in itself comes from the root word, shūv. It means: to turn back, to return. Teshuvah means going back to one’s roots in Yahweh/Yeshua, returning to the true Adam before sin came into the world.

Teshuva Customs

Beginning on the second day of Rosh Chodesh Elul and continuing until (but not including) the day before Yom Teruah, it is customary to blow the Shofar every weekday morning. When Moses went up the second time to receive the tablets of the Ten Commandments, the Israelites blew the Shofar in the Camp. This was done to remind themselves of their sin of the Golden Calf, and to assure that they would not again succumb to the sin of idol worship.

To this day the Shofar is blown throughout Elul to remember that, just as the children of Israel sinned and were forgiven, we too have sinned and need to use this period to sincerely repent, so that we too can be forgiven. The sound of the Shofar during Elul symbolically declares, “Awake all you who are asleep; search your ways and mend them in repentance.”

During Elul, many Jews will recite Chapter 27 of Tehilim (Psalms) as part of the morning and afternoon prayers. It is also common at this time to visit the grave sites of loved ones. As the month of Elul draws to an end, our efforts towards repentance become more intense.

Beginning on the Sunday before Yom Teruah until Yom Kippur, special penitential prayers called Selichot are added to the daily cycle of worship. Selichot prayers are usually recited in the early morning, before the normal daily morning service. However, Selichot usually begins on Motzei Shabbat (after nightfall on Saturday) of the week before Yom Teruah. The first Selichot service of the season is usually held around midnight, the earliest possible time, to demonstrate our eagerness to seek forgiveness. The late night service is usually preceded by study on themes related to the High Holy Days.

The Books Of Judgments And Of Life

Daniel 7:9-10 – “I saw until thrones were placed, and one who was ancient of days sat: his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and the wheels of it burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated and the **Books** were opened.”

Revelation 20:11-15 – “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and **Books** were opened. And another **Book** was opened, which is the **Book of Life**. And the dead were judged according to their

works, by the things which were written in the **Books**. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the **Book of Life** was cast into the lake of fire.”

According to Jewish tradition, on Yom Teruah the destiny of the righteous, the *tsaddikim*, are written in the *Book Of Life*, and the destiny of the wicked, the *resha'im*, are written in the *Book Of Death*. However, many people, perhaps most people, will not be inscribed in either Book, but will have ten days (until Yom Kippur) to repent before sealing their fate. Hence the term *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah* (the Ten Days of Repentance). It is traditional at this time to greet one another with *L'Shanah Tovah Tikatevu!* which means “*May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a good year!*” One responds with “*gam lekha*”, or “*Same to you*”.

Yahweh is Near

Isaiah 55:6 – “*Seek Yahweh when he is at hand; call upon him when he is near.*”

Joel 2:1 – “*Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of Yahweh comes, it is close at hand.*”

Jewish tradition teaches that the Holy One is more accessible during the 40-day period beginning with the start of Elul and culminating in the first ten days of the month of Tishrei, ending with Yom Kippur.

This is the time when the sages say the Eternal King leaves the heavenly throne and descends to inspect this world; as a period when “The King is in the Field.” When the “King is in the Field,” out to inspect the produce of his land, he is concerned about the well-being of the inhabitants of his kingdom.

This is the period when some believe we are closest to God, and God is most receptive to our prayers. This is based in the notion that, when a king is enthroned in his palace, he is not easily accessible; audience is granted only to those who have merited his attention. But when the king is out in public, anyone may approach him.

We look to the words of the prophet Isaiah, and make special efforts during this period to renew our commitment to Yahweh/Yeshua, when the Holy One is traditionally “nearest” to us. Not only is this the time when the king may be approached by the farmer, but the farmer should approach him, to show respect, and to take full advantage of this rare opportunity to express his needs and thoughts to the king.

Ten Days of Repentance – The Days of Awe

Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, or the *Ten Days of Repentance*, are the ten days starting with Yom Teruah and ending with Yom Kippur and are commonly known as the Days of Awe (*Yamim Noraim*) or the Days of Repentance. The first two days of *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah* are the two days of Yom Teruah, and the third day is the Fast of Gedalia. Beginning on the second day, the shofar is blown every day as a warning to return to Yahweh in repentance. The tenth day is the last day of *Teshuvah*, the day of Yom Kippurim. Those who are neither totally righteous nor totally wicked will have until Yom Kippurim to repent.

The last ten days are also known as the Days of Awe, a term that is more commonly known as the Days of Jacob’s Trouble and represent the Tribulation Period that will purge the Earth of evil. If you only count the days between Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur the number of days is seven, the same as the number of years in the tribulation period!

The tenth day is the last day of *Teshuvah*, the day of Yom Kippurim. The Feast of Yom Kippurim symbolizes the final writing of the verdict that each person listed in the Book of Life is a righteous one, a *tzaddik* (צַדִּיק), or is forever separated from Yahweh. There are but a few days left to repent and return, to *teshuvah*. This is a time for serious introspection, a time to consider the sins of the previous year and repent before Yom Kippur.

One of the ongoing themes of the Days of Awe is the concept that Yahweh has “books” that He writes our names in, writing down who will live and who will die, who will have a good life and who will have a bad life, for the next year. These books are written in on Yom Teruah, but our actions during the Days of Awe can alter Yahweh’s decree. The actions that change the decree are “*teshuvah, tefilah and tzedakah*” repentance, prayer, and good deeds (or charity). These books are sealed on Yom Kippur. This concept of writing in books is the source of the common greeting during this time is “*May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year.*” Make full use of this time lest you be separated forever and consigned to the Lake of Fire for all eternity.

The Forty Day Connections

Exodus 34:28 – “*Moshe was there with Yahweh forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread, nor drank water.*”

Jonah 3:4 – “*Jonah entered into the city a day's journey, and he cried out and said: ‘Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown’.*”

Matthew and Luke 4:1-2 – “*And Yeshua was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for forty days and nights.*”

The forty days of Teshuvah represent the time frame of the fall feasts – the days of Yom Teruah, Yom Kippurim, and Sukkoth!!!! Elul 1 to Tishri 10! They also represent numerous forty day events that scripture records:

- ✓ For forty days the rain came down upon the earth, and flooded the entire planet (**Genesis 7:4-17**).
- ✓ After the rains stopped, it was forty days before Noah exited the Ark (**Genesis 8:6**).
- ✓ Moshe was on the mountain for forty days (**Exodus 24:18**).
- ✓ The second forty days was due to the Golden Calf incident when Moses interceded for the people. Moses ascended on Yom Teruah and returned on Yom Kippurim (**Exodus 34:28**).
- ✓ Jonah was in Nineveh for forty days calling out for repentance. Jonah left Nineveh on the day of Yom Kippurim (**Jonah 3:4**), traveled to the east, and built himself a sukkah! (**Jonah 4:5**).
- ✓ Yeshua entered the Wilderness on Yom Teruah, fasted and prayed for forty days and returned on Yom Kippurim. (**Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:1**).

Conclusions

The forty Days of Teshuva are days of repentance. Yahweh has books that he writes our names in, writing down who will live and who will die, who will have a good life and who will have a bad life, for the next year. These books are written in on Yom Teruah, but our actions during the Days of Awe can alter his decree.

Many of the forty day events of scripture take place during the same forty day time frame as the forty Days of Teshuva, Elul 1 to Tishri 10, – the time frame of the fall feasts – the days of Yom Teruah, Yom Kippurim, and Sukkoth.