

## 40 – Ki Teitzei - Outline

### Snapshot of Generosity

- God Values Giving (<https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/god-values-giving>)

### More on the Month of Elul and Teshuvah:

- Review:
  - “Elul” = “harvest,” ball in our court, chush: “action,” mazal: Virgo, the Virgin
    - these together lead us to the big emphasis of Elul: teshuvah, return, repentance
    - teshuvah is how the fallen bride becomes a virgin again – not possible in the physical realm, but possible in the spiritual realm
- What is Repentance?
  - classically: ([https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/361890/jewish/Teshuvah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/361890/jewish/Teshuvah.htm))
    - 1) regret of a misdeed
    - 2) the decision to change
    - 3) the verbal expression of one’s sins
  - we can add the beginning of taking action to change (proves our repentance to be genuine)
- it’s a serious business that many don’t take advantage of in the month
  - the enemy within really fights this business
    - note that Ki Teitzei begins and ends with war; teshuvah is, in a way, a battle within ourselves
    - “You don’t have time for this. You don’t have the NEED for this. You’re doing teshuvah all the time, anyway.”
      - while it’s true that we should always be doing teshuvah, THIS is the season specially designed for repentance
- don’t lose the joy in it
  - “...I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who REPENTS than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7)
  - and there’s joy inwardly for the one who repents
- a practicality of the season: this is also a time to focus on extending forgiveness to others, knowing that we will be judged by the measure with which we judge others
- “Ani L’dodi, V’dodi Li”
  - “ELUL” is said to be an acronym for: “I am to my beloved, and my beloved is to me,” (Song of Songs 6:3)
  - there is an affirmation of love happening in this month, in two directions
    - when we have really messed up in a relationship, the first thing we do is look at the one who was wronged and say, “Do you still want me?” The month of Elul has inherent in it the answer, “Yes, you are still my choice!”
    - it’s a time for re-establishing the very foundation of our relationship with God
- the King is in the Field

- in this season of repentance, why should we think we are going to do any better? God must do a deep work of grace in us
  - true, but that work is some weeks away in Tishrei (Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot)
  - the Altar Rebbe used a metaphor to describe how we relate to God in this month: “the King is in the field”
    - normally, getting an audience with a king is difficult and requires time, but in this month, God puts on the clothes of a commoner and steps away from the palace to enter the fields to talk with the people
      - He helps us with the process of teshuvah
      - just as the King must leave the palace, so must we leave our homes to meet Him in the field; it requires initiative on our part
    - this idea is verified in the Apostolic Scriptures
      - before Yeshua begins His ministry, God sends John the Baptist to do the same preparatory work we do now as we await the coming of the Messiah in the 7<sup>th</sup> month: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”
    - John the Baptist is, himself, a picture of the Holy Spirit
      - the Holy Spirit prepares human hearts for the arrival of the Messiah: the Spirit brings conviction concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8)
    - what we can learn from all these connections: God specially provides His Spirit at this time to help us repent, to help us lay the foundation for the coming of His Son
      - as we walk through the hot and sunny wilderness of the summer, God is reaching out to us now through the Holy Spirit (Moses), helping us in the wilderness to prepare the way of the LORD, to make straight in the desert a highway for our God (Isaiah 40:3)
        - Moses is followed by Joshua (Yehoshua)
      - amazing to see all the Jewish and Christian connections come together to illuminate each other, helping us to walk the seasons with knowledge

### **Ki Teitzei Summary**

- “Ki Teitzei” = “when you go out”
  - “When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God gives them into your hand and you take them captive...” (Deuteronomy 21:10)

- final topic is also war: perpetual war with Amalek
- Ki Teitzei contains more commandments than any other portion, more than 70
  - one theme is family interactions and specifically marital interactions:
    - the procedure for marrying a captive woman, inheritance rights of the firstborn, the rebellious son, judicial procedures for adultery and rape and for the husband who falsely accuses his wife, intermarriage with certain groups of people, laws of divorce, and levirate marriage
  - a variety of other topics:
    - burial of one hanged on a tree, returning lost animals and objects, sending away the mother bird when taking eggs, constructing a safety fence on a roof, forbidden mixing of animals and plants, purity of a military camp, the prohibition on returning an escaped slave, the duty to pay a worker on time, laws regarding debtors and charging interest, and finally Amalek

### Placing Ki Teitzei

- we're really getting into the nitty gritty here with Ki Teitzei
  - we're moving toward an end point; this is the last portion that is focused on listing out the commandments
    - next portion is largely made up of blessings and curses
    - when we begin to approach the end of a development process we find a branching into details, tangible details and specifics
      - as with the great detail in the book of Esther, which we read at the end of a cycle of development (12<sup>th</sup> month)
      - at the end, the light of truth that has been big and bright and not so defined has been getting more and more concrete and, at the end, gets applied to all the little areas of life.
        - all the little mundane areas of this world and our day-to-day human lives need to be elevated to serve spiritual purposes, so at the end, we're reaching down into the nitty gritty details of life to put them to use as vessels for holiness.
        - example from Ki Teitzei: the commandment to cover one's wastes while in an army camp (because God is present in the camp) elevates both the army camp to a place of holiness and elevates the very mundane process of relieving oneself by making it an act that aligns with a commandment of God; such a low and common part of life becomes an instrument for maintaining relationship with our Creator!
  - all the little detailed commandments have self-sacrificial love at their root
    - selfless love is the goal of the salvation pattern

- with the military camp example, even deeper than the need to have a pure camp is God's desire that we show selfless love to each other; the type of military camp He wants to indwell is one wherein the soldiers give selflessly
- other examples of selfless love from Ki Teitzei: if the firstborn is from a lesser-loved wife, you still treat him fairly as the firstborn even if your desire is to bless the son of the loved wife. It says that you go out of your way to return a lost animal or object. It says that you pay money to make your rooftop safe. It says that if you take a poor man's cloak as a pledge, return it to him before the sun goes down because he needs it to stay warm at night
- Ki Teitzei helps us at this point in the calendar by training us to use everything in our lives for self-sacrificial love, which, in a way, is at the root of our self-examination for purposes of teshuvah

### **As We Repent, a Message to Men**

- there's much in the portion about men interacting with women and sexual immorality
- men, in particular, are struggling with purity these days
  - when a man doesn't rise up to the lofty position of priest for the home, he will fall to a very low place
    - men should consider this in our process of repentance in Elul
    - men stand between God and the family and are to feed and protect the family both spiritually and physically
      - men are gifted with a certain kind of creativity and intellectual curiosity useful for exploring within the Torah and physical strengths for working outside the home
        - either you put the male energies and skills God has given you to work for good, spiritual purposes, or those energies and skills will drive you into the ground

### **As We Repent, A Message to All: 4 Ways to Be Lost**

- based on the following message from R'YY Jacobson:
 

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tmJg3uXlpE&list=PLM70XDINWz5iMBI360O-YZAL2hYxwVVCO&index=22>)
- we can learn from the 4 "lost" animals and objects from the following verses: "You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray and ignore them. You shall take them back to your brother. And if he does not live near you and you do not know who he is, you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall stay with you until your brother seeks it. Then you shall restore it to him. And you shall do the same with his donkey or with his garment, or with any lost thing of your brother's, which he loses and you find; you may not ignore it" (Deuteronomy 22:1-3)
  - ox (bull): usually calm and accommodating, but are prone to violent outbursts that can be deadly

- as we think about repentance in the month of Elul, let's recognize that we all have this capacity in us to be placid one moment, then suddenly lash out, even violently
      - part of repentance is analyzing the chain that leads to such a moment of weakness and purposing to set up guardrails against it happening again
  - sheep: very social, compliant and productive, but timid, "followers" that don't express their own will
    - as we repent in the month of Elul, let's think about how fear is holding us back from expressing the unique will and personality God gave us for the building up of the body
  - donkey: strong and intelligent, in some ways combining the best of the bull (strength) and sheep (willing to be led), but can sometimes dig in and refuse to move - stubbornness
    - as we repent in the month of Elul, let's think about how it is that we have been stubborn, maybe in refusing to listen to whatever God has been tapping us on the shoulder about
  - garment: clothing can be costly and beautiful and expresses the person inside, but a lost article of clothing lacks life!
    - in terms of repentance, we can think of the lost article of clothing as the parts of our world that God has entrusted to us that we are not putting to use for Him, having failed to breathe life into them by using them for spiritual purposes
- the "sinful" behavior of the 3 animals all has fear at its root:
  - ox- gets violent when it's fearful
  - sheep- are generally fearful
  - donkey- won't budge when it's fearful
  - fear is the root of much sin in our lives and should be examined during Elul
- the lost objects follow the salvation pattern, but in reverse, from physical to spiritual:
  - bull's problem: brute physicality and instinct
  - sheep's problem: fear (emotion, also intellect)
  - donkey: will (very high in the soul)
  - garment: lacks the spirit of life

## Yeshua

- the haftarah for Ki Teitzei from Isaiah 54, wonderful promises of fruitfulness for Israel, rests on the suffering of the Messiah in Isaiah 52 and 53
- think about the unfulfilled potential in your life, then listen to the haftarah, understanding that the Messiah has made the way for both the return to an innocent state and for that unrealized potential to be fulfilled
- Isaiah 54:1-10
  - "'SING, O BARREN ONE, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married," says the LORD. 'Enlarge the place of your tent, and let

the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities. FEAR NOT, FOR YOU WILL NOT BE ASHAMED; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; FOR YOU WILL FORGET THE SHAME OF YOUR YOUTH, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your Maker is your Husband, the LORD of Hosts is His name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth He is called. For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing anger for a moment I hid My face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,' says the LORD, your Redeemer. 'This is like the days of Noah to Me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and My covenant of peace shall not be removed,' says the LORD, who has compassion on you."

#### **40 – Ki Teitzei – Transcript (not exact)**

Hello and welcome to Beth Tikkun and this series called Spiritual Seasons, where we are diving into the weekly Torah portions through the lens of the bigger pattern of salvation we find in the yearly calendar. This week we are in parsha Ki Teitzei, from the middle of Deuteronomy 21 through chapter 25.

This month we are encouraged to increase in our tzedakah, so I've been trying to include a snapshot or two of generous people in these teachings, and I'll start off that way today. This one is about a quiet giver, which are the best kind.

In 1995 the nation was stunned when news broke that an elderly woman named Oseola McCarty had donated \$150,000 to the University of Southern Mississippi for their scholarship fund. This eighty-seven-year-old woman had been forced to drop out of school in the sixth grade to care for her family. For more than sixty years she made a living washing clothes for hire in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, saving as much as she could from her meager pay. She wanted others to have the opportunity for the education she never received, so she gave away the money she had saved for so many years.

Source: *Notable American Philanthropists*, Robert T. Grimm

<https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/god-values-giving>

You know, I bet the fact that Ms. McCarty was saving all that money for a good cause gave her a lot of strength and even joy in the difficult work she did all those years. There's work, and then there's work for the good of the world, and they are two very different things.

#### **More on the Month of Elul and Teshuvah**

Before we get into our portion today, I want to bring out a few ideas for the month of Elul that we weren't able to get to last week. By way of quick review first, though, last week we talked

about how “Elul,” which is the 6<sup>th</sup> month, means “harvest” in the original Akkadian language, and that Elul is considered a month in which the ball is in our court to act. The chush of the month is, in fact, action, and the mazal is Virgo, the Virgin. All of these taken together led us to the big emphasis of Elul, teshuvah, repentance. Repentance is the big harvest that the journey from the first month has been leading to. Listen carefully to this: teshuvah is how the fallen bride becomes a virgin again. This is not possible in the physical realm, but in the spiritual realm, it IS possible to go back to that earlier state of innocence, by God’s grace through the blood of Yeshua the Messiah. There is great power in repentance, and the time for repentance is now, in Elul.

What is Repentance?

So, what is repentance? Classically, there are three ingredients to genuine return, genuine teshuvah: 1) regret of a misdeed, 2) the decision to change, and 3) the verbal expression of one’s sins ([https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/361890/jewish/Teshuvah.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/361890/jewish/Teshuvah.htm)). Again these three aspects to repentance are regret of a misdeed, the decision to change, and the verbal expression of the sin. And we can add that we show our repentance to be genuine by beginning to make the changes even now. So this is the business we are to be about now and that God is providing a special ability for us to do now: to feel regret for how it is that we have failed to hit the mark in our walk, to purpose to change, and to give verbal expression to the sin, leading to the beginning of change, even now.

This is a serious business in Elul, and many do not take advantage of the month in this way. The enemy within really fights this business. Let’s note this week that our portion, Ki Teitzei, begins and ends with the context of battle, war. The portion begins, “When you go out to war...” and this is where we get the name of the portion, “when you go out.” Doing teshuva is like doing battle; it’s like making war against our enemies within. And those enemies will fight with us now by saying, “You don’t have time for this. You don’t have the NEED for this. You’re doing teshuvah all the time, anyway.” This is true, but understand that God has specially designed the calendar to help us do certain kinds of spiritual work in certain seasons of the year. There is a time designed for sowing and a time designed for watering and a time designed for reaping. We can and should be doing teshuvah constantly. But now is the season specially designed for it. It is life for us to get in line with God’s design. So show no mercy to those enemies that would pull you away from the joyous work of teshuvah now.

I say “joyous,” which is maybe not a word we would be quick to place on the hard work of return. But listen to Yeshua’s words in Luke 15: “...I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who REPENTS than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7). And there is much joy here, too, inwardly in the one who repents. And so let’s not lose track of the joy in this season, too.

And one more practical thought here on the process of repentance in general, this is also a time to focus on extending forgiveness to others, knowing that we will be judged with the measure by which we judge others. You want to be forgiven? Forgive. Don’t be like the unforgiving

servant who was relieved a huge debt but turned right around and wouldn't forgive those who were indebted to him. It didn't end well for him.

Ani L'dodi, V'dodi Li

Let's continue now on the topic of the month of Elul with two big ideas we have yet to mention connected to the month, the idea that "Elul" is also an acronym and the concept that "the King is in the field" now.

According to the rabbis, the four letters that spell "Elul" are an acronym for a phrase from the Song of Solomon (6:3), "I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me," "Ani L'dodi, V'dodi Li." What is this about? Well, in short, there is an affirmation of love happening in this month, in two directions. Imagine you really messed up in a relationship. What's the first thing you do to start to repair the relationship? You look at the one who you wronged, and you say, "Do you still want me?" It's like we're doing that now. And the answer we get back is, "Yes, you are still my choice. You are still the one. You are my beloved, and you are mine." This affirming idea is at the very root of the month, which is a time for re-establishing the very foundation of our relationship with God.

The King is in the Field

Moving on now to the second idea, let's approach it by asking, "So here we are in a season of introspection and repentance and action, making changes, but why should we think we're going to do any better this time around?" Unless God does a deep work of grace in us, are we not the same people?

Well, in fact, this is true. But this deep work we need Him to do IS COMING in the month of Tishrei, the 7<sup>th</sup> month, the month of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot; it's a work that changes the heart. But that's next month. What about now? By what power do we begin to change now in this preparatory month of Elul?

This brings us to the idea that "the King is in the field," which is a metaphor used by the Alter Rebbe to describe how God relates to us in the month of Elul. The connections here, especially for a Believer familiar with the Apostolic Scriptures, are fascinating. Normally, to see a king, you have to be put on a list and wait for the appropriate time, and most people can never even get on the list. But what happens if one day the king decides to put on street clothes and slip out of the castle and wander into the fields. The common folk hear, and one by one like sheep that go to greet the shepherd, they go out to the field to see him and talk with him and tell him about their needs. In other words, even though we've been talking about this rift in our relationship that has opened over the summer, and the set time for healing is still some weeks away, God makes Himself accessible even now to help us in the process of teshuvah, to help us prepare for the coming outpouring of His grace. Repentance is tough, but He does not leave us without help. The rabbis are saying that HE IS HERE WITH US already in Elul, beside us, helping us, but IN ANOTHER FORM, in the clothes of a commoner, approachable, and with a smile on His face. But in the same way that He leaves the castle to go to the field, so do we have to leave OUR homes



to go meet Him in the field now. There's also some initiative on our part, some work and risk involved in going to meet Him now.

I believe what the rabbis are honing in on here is clearly verified in a wonderful way in the Apostolic Scriptures, and by combining the Jewish and the Christian perspectives, we get the fuller picture. It goes like this. We are in the lead-up to God's work of restoration through Yeshua in Tishrei. If we look into the Gospels at the actual coming of the Messiah, what happens just before Yeshua begins His earthly ministry? What happens to prepare the minds and hearts of the people? God sends someone to prepare the way for Yeshua, John the Immerser, John the Baptist. And what is John's message? It is the message of Elul: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." In a way, John the Baptist is a picture of the King leaving the palace and entering the field of this world and the field of the human heart.

Well, let's go one step further. John the Baptist is not quite the King and is not with us today. But John the Baptist, himself, pictures someone else who, in fact, IS with us today. Grant has taught before about the many connections between John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit; John pictures the work of the Holy Spirit, which prepares human hearts for the arrival of the Messiah. The Spirit is active in different ways at different phases in the life of Believer, and one of these ways is as the God-given Helper that prepares us for the visitation of the Messiah. In John we read that the Spirit helps in this way by bringing conviction, conviction concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8).

So here we have this rabbinic teaching that the King is in the field in the month of Elul, the month before the judgment in Tishrei, and the King is said to help us with repentance, which is also what the Holy Spirit does. Here's what we can learn from all these connections: God SPECIALLY PROVIDES HIS SPIRIT AT THIS TIME to help us repent, to help us lay the foundation for the coming of His Son. Again, as we walk through this hot and sunny WILDERNESS of the summer, God is specially reaching out to us now through the Holy Spirit, helping us in the wilderness to prepare the way of the LORD, to make straight in the desert a highway for our God (Isaiah 40:3). We are now closing out the wilderness phase in the calendar, and Joshua is about to take over to lead us into the Land of Promise.

It's quite wonderful to see what the rabbis have discerned here in the calendar and to marry that to the fullness of Scripture: "Elul has repentance at its root," say the rabbis; "the King is in the Field," say the rabbis. "The 10 Days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur are about judgment," say the rabbis. We wonder where they get such statements from, and too often we just ignore such statements. And yet, here again, we see that these insights not only align with the Apostolic Scriptures, but they also help us to open up the calendar for us as we walk out the mo'edim. "The King is in the Field in Elul" say the rabbis, and the followers of Yeshua should understand, "Embrace the work of the Holy Spirit now. It will lead you in the process of repentance. God is here with us, but in a different form. And the marriage of the Lamb to His Bride is coming. Let's get ready for the wedding now."

## **Ki Teitzei Summary**

Well, now that our time is half gone, let's get to "Ki Teitzei!" As I mentioned, "Ki Teitzei" means "when you go out" and is taken from the first verse, which reads: "When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God gives them into your hand and you take them captive..." (Deuteronomy 21:10), and it goes on from there to describe the process for marrying a captive woman. So, again, "when you go out" here is in the context of war. And we find war once again at the end with the commands to remember what Amalek did to you when you were leaving Egypt and to blot out the memory of Amalek. So we have war at the beginning and end.

Ki Teitzei contains 31 topics and over 70 commandments, more commandments than any other portion. Many of the topics involve family interactions and specifically marital interactions. These involving family and marriage include the procedure for marrying a captive woman, inheritance rights of the firstborn, the rebellious son, judicial procedures for adultery and rape and for the husband who falsely accuses his wife, intermarriage with certain groups of people, laws of divorce, and levirate marriage. So, while there is an emphasis here on marriage and family, there are many other types of topics here too, including burial of one hanged on a tree, returning lost animals and objects, sending away the mother bird when taking eggs, constructing a safety fence on a roof, forbidden mixing of animals and plants, purity of a military camp, the prohibition on returning an escaped slave, the duty to pay a worker on time, laws regarding debtors and charging interest, and finally Amalek.

### **Placing Ki Teitzei**

Let's think now about how Ki Teitzei fits into the flow of the portions and into the calendar. We're really getting into the nitty gritty here with Ki Teitzei, and this makes sense because we're moving toward an end point. This is the last portion that is focused on listing out the commandments. The next portion is largely made up of blessings and curses, and from there the ending chapters of Deuteronomy describe Moses' final actions and parting words. One thing we always notice when we begin to approach the end of a development process is this great branching into details, tangible details and specifics, like we see in the book of Esther's description of the great party of the Persian King. We read Esther near THE END of the development process of the year, in the 12<sup>th</sup> month. What happens at the end is that the ideas that the light of truth that has been big and bright and not so defined is here at the end getting applied to all the little areas of life.

You see, all the little mundane areas of this world and our day-to-day human lives need to be elevated to serve spiritual purposes. So at the end of the salvation pattern, we're reaching down deep into the nitty gritty details of life and putting those to use as vessels for holiness. Speaking of the mundane in this parshah, for example, we have the command regarding soldiers covering their waste when they are out in the wilds and have to relieve themselves. And why is it important for them to do that? Because God walks through the camp, and it needs to be an elevated place, a refined place. What this commandment does is raise the level of a mundane military camp to a holy place where God dwells. And it takes the very routine matter of relieving oneself and elevates that behavior, too, by making it an act that aligns with a commandment of God. It's not just the act of any animal out there in the wild. Honoring this

commandment makes that very commonplace part of life a means of MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIP with our Creator. All of these impact relationships with God and mankind. These details, each of these commandments in this great list, are not to be taken lightly. They are like gems in a crown.

And if we think a bit more into this example of the military camp, there's really more there than just having a pure camp. Underneath is the idea that we should go through a little extra trouble to spare others from having to deal with our mess. What kind of camp does God feel comfortable in? It's not just one that is clean. It's a camp where the soldiers are thinking of the needs of each other, a place where brother shows selfless love to brother.

And this idea of selfless love, or self-sacrificial love that puts others first and self second, brings us to the real root of how we put all the nitty gritty of life to work for spiritual purposes. It's about showing love to others. When we do that, we welcome God to dwell in our midst. So as we reach a place of maturity, we're seeing more and more how we can use every aspect of our lives and every resource and every mundane action as a way to show love for others. That is what all this physical stuff is meant to be used for, and self-sacrificial love is really what is at the root of each of these commandments in this great list that begins to bring Moses' great recitation of the Torah to a close. Grant has boiled down this list of commandments in Ki Teitzei to the single connecting idea of respect for others. And in my mind, anyway, "respect for others" is another way to say, "love for others—" I put myself second and you first; this is the essence of showing respect for others.

To give a few more examples here of selfless love at the root of these commandments, we read in Ki Teitzei that if the firstborn is from a lesser-loved wife, you still treat him fairly as the firstborn even if your desire is to bless the son of the loved wife. It says that you go out of your way to return a lost animal or object. It says that you pay money to make your rooftop safe. It says that if you take a poor man's cloak as a pledge, return it to him before the sun goes down because he needs it to stay warm at night. Again, self-sacrificial love is the root of each of these specific commandments because it's the root of the Torah and the goal of our spiritual journey.

And let me mention here that our calendar context for reading through all these commandments in Elul is that we are now digging into the nitty gritty details of our lives to see how we can be better walking in love, leading to repentance. At the root of our process of teshuvah is the question, "How can I be walking better in love for God and my neighbor?" Ki Teitzei helps to train us to see the world through the eyes of the practical, how we walk out love in practical ways. That's our focus now.

### **As We Repent, A Message to Men**

Let's turn now to looking at some details in the portion in terms of our overall discussion. As I mentioned earlier, many of the commandments here are dealing with family relations and the interactions of husbands with their wives or other women, including unmarried women. There are a number of laws here specifically about sexual immorality. I want to address the men specifically for a minute in the context of the repentance of the month of Elul.

I was part of a discussion recently with a rabbi in which another participant, a woman, was struggling with the laws regarding taking a wife from the war captives. And as part of that conversation, the woman mentioned that it seemed like so many men in particular were really at war with their lower selves. And the rabbi told a story about how he did his time in the Israeli army and how he happened to get into a unit that was almost entirely secular Jewish men, and one aspect of his service really, really bothered him – it was how consumed the men’s conversation was with crude joking and constant sexual conversation. Men, we don’t have to look very hard at our world today to see how very deeply men are struggling and how low particularly many men have sunk.

Here is what I want to say about this today, and we men should consider this in our process of repentance in Elul. When a man doesn’t rise up to the lofty position of priest for the home, he will fall to a very low place. Either you put the male energies and skills God has given you to work for good, spiritual purposes, or those energies and skills will drive you into the ground. There’s no middle area here. By God’s design, men are to feed and protect the family both spiritually and physically. By being in the Word daily, and through prayer, men take in spiritual energy from God and are then able to pass that light along to their wives and children. And by going out into the world to work, men are able to pass along a physical blessing to their families. And God gifts men with a kind of imagination and intellectual curiosity that helps him in a special way in Torah. And, too, men are also gifted with physical strengths to be able to protect and provide physically.

But when these gifts are not put to use as they should be, they don’t go away. Instead, they get turned to evil. And in the end, the ones who are supposed to be in a kind of elevated intercessory role end up like animals – selfish and driven by the pursuit of pleasure. Let’s consider these ideas this month as we evaluate our walks with the Lord.

### **As We Repent, A Message to All: 4 Ways to Be Lost**

Well, moving on now, as a final topic before we turn our focus to Yeshua, I want to open up one passage in particular according to the salvation pattern, again in the light of the repentance of the month. The general concept here comes from a teaching by R’YY Jacobson ”

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tmJg3uXLpE&list=PLM20XDINWz5jMBI3600-YZAL2hVxwVVC0&index=22>). I’ll include a link to that teaching in the notes. We can call this section “4 Ways to Be Lost.” It comes out of the first three verses of chapter 22. Listen for the four specifically named lost items here: “You shall not see your brother’s ox or his sheep going astray and ignore them. You shall take them back to your brother. And if he does not live near you and you do not know who he is, you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall stay with you until your brother seeks it. Then you shall restore it to him. And you shall do the same with his donkey or with his garment, or with any lost thing of your brother’s, which he loses and you find; you may not ignore it” (Deuteronomy 22:1-3).

In the order given, the specific lost items here are the ox, the sheep, the donkey, and the garment. Let’s look at how each of these animals or objects is lacking balance. Each of them is meant to mirror to us human beings our own tendencies.

First mentioned is the ox. The ox's great gift is its strength and ability to do work. Here, though, the ox has gone astray; it has become lost. So let's think about what tendency in the ox we can anthropomorphize into a sinful tendency in human beings. First, let's note that "ox" just means a bull or cow that is trained to do work. Usually they're not females but are castrated bulls, which makes them more compliant. But the Hebrew word here, "shor," can mean either "ox" or "bull." Let's think in terms of a normal bull. Bulls are usually calm and accommodating, but they can be prone to violent outbursts, and when you're dealing with a thousand or two thousand pounds of animal, these outbursts can be fatal. As we think about repentance in the month of Elul, let's recognize that we all have this capacity in us to be placid one moment, then suddenly lash out, even violently. This is sin and an aspect of being lost. When this happens, when we have a failure and lash out, we need to not let that experience go to waste. We need to track down the set of events that led to that moment and purpose to set up guardrails that will stop us from falling over that cliff. This is part of repentance.

Next is the sheep. Sheep are very social and compliant and productive animals. In terms of seeing in them a tendency that, in a human being, would be sinful, sheep are timid, and this timidity leads to sheep expressing little will of their own. Sheep are followers. It's one thing to be laid back, and it's another to be swept along with whatever movement surrounds you because you never want to stick your head up a bit. As we repent in the month of Elul, let's think about how fear is holding us back from expressing the unique will and personality God gave us for the building up of the body. For many of us, it's easier to sit back and never put ourselves forward, but the whole body loses when that happens.

Next is the donkey. The donkey is strong and intelligent. In some ways, the donkey combines the best of the bull and the sheep. It can bear great burdens like a bull but is also usually very loyal and willing to be led like a sheep. And the donkey is smarter than both. But we know that a special problem for the donkey is that it can occasionally just dig in its hooves and not move, the problem of stubbornness. All of us have a stubborn streak. As we repent in the month of Elul, let's think about how it is that we have been stubborn to a fault and what we need to do to change that. Has God been tapping you on your shoulder with a particular message that you have stubbornly been ignoring?

Last, we have the garment. Clothing can be quite costly and beautiful and expressive of the person inside the clothing. Our clothes are a kind of outgrowth of our souls. What is the problem for a lost article of clothing? Well, clothing is different from the others in that there's no life in it, particularly when it's lost! In terms of repentance, we can think of the lost article of clothing as the parts of our world that God has entrusted to us that we are not putting to use for Him. We have failed to breathe life into them by using them for spiritual purposes. Think now about what you have been given in terms of talents or physical blessing that you have not activated for good purposes and have, effectively, cast aside and maybe even forgotten about. Repent of that, and come up with a plan to fill up those neglected places with life.

A couple quick points now about these lost objects in general: the root of the problem for each of the three living things, the animals, is fear. The bull reacts violently WHEN IT IS AFRAID. The sheep's timidity is rooted in fear. The donkey, too, becomes stubborn when it is afraid. Fear is the great life killer. Fear is the root of much sin in our lives. In this month of repentance, let's focus on how fear holds us back in our walk with the Lord.

Lastly here, notice that these lost objects occur in a certain order that is familiar to us as we study God's pattern of salvation. We find this pattern on every level, and here in a small list of lost objects. These objects are arranged from the physical to the spiritual, so the reverse of the order we are normally emphasizing. The bull's problem is one of brute physicality and instinct. The sheep's problem is especially an emotional one, the sheep being most centered on fear; sheep are a bit intellectually challenged, too. The donkey's problem is not intellect but willfulness, the will being an especially high aspect of the soul. And the garment's problem is that it lacks the spirit of life, the breath of life, the spiritual foundation. Again, we can see here an arrangement from low to high.

### **Yeshua**

Lastly today, By way of connection to Yeshua, I want to just read the haftarah portion, which is not very long this week. It's one of the seven Haftarot of Consolation, and it's taken from Isaiah 54. This haftarah is strongly connected to Yeshua because it is preceded by what my Bible labels in chapter 52 "The Exalted Servant," which is clearly Messianic and talks about the Messiah's appearance being marred, and this is followed by "The Suffering Servant" in Isaiah 53, which speaks of the Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief, stricken for our transgressions. These lead into this week's haftarah, which turns away from the stricken Messiah to address Israel. It begins, "Shout for joy, O barren one." We don't get to the exultation and victory and joy of Isaiah 54 without passing through the suffering of the Messiah in Isaiah 52 and 53. So as I read the haftarah now in 54, with the last topic of the lost garment in view, think about the potential you have been given that has not manifested in your life, that YOU HAVE NOT MANIFESTED because fear, and pride, and mistakes have interfered. You can even pause the video now to spend a moment thinking about the unfulfilled potential in your life. ... Now, as you listen to the haftarah, understand that the Messiah has made the way for both the return to an innocent state and for that unrealized potential to be fulfilled.

“SING, O BARREN ONE, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,” says the LORD. ‘Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your offspring will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities. FEAR NOT, FOR YOU WILL NOT BE ASHAMED; be not confounded, for you will not be disgraced; FOR YOU WILL FORGET THE SHAME OF YOUR YOUTH, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more. For your Maker is your Husband, the LORD of Hosts is His name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth He is called. For the LORD has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I

deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing anger for a moment I hid My face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,' says the LORD, your Redeemer. 'This is like the days of Noah to Me: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you, and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and My covenant of peace shall not be removed,' says the LORD, who has compassion on you" (Isaiah 54:1-10).

Well, that's all for today. May the Lord bless us with the gift of repentance in the month of Elul. May He grant us a special sensitivity to the voice of the Spirit now that is leading us and helping us to repent. May He grant us the great blessing of being able to utilize every mundane thing for self-sacrificial, spiritual purposes. And may we rise up to be the people He has made us to be. Shalom.