

THE TWO STAFFS OF ELUL

QUESTION: What is a staff used for today? What was it used for in ancient times?

Today a staff may be used for walking. But in ancient times, the staff was a critical component and instrument of correction and protection. The shepherd's staff is the most popular of all the staffs and was used to keep the sheep in line. He would use it in a variety of ways. Sometimes he would just hold it out to one side so they could see it and would go in the opposite direction. At other times he would poke them in the side so they would do what he wanted them to do. And still at other times he would have to use the staff as a weapon to ward off predators that wanted to take advantage of his flock. In the same way, the Father uses His staff, His Holy Word, to guide, poke, chastise, and protect us. His staff was a symbol of power and authority.



The second most popular staff in ancient times was the scepter, or the staff of the king. The crosier of Pharaoh or the scepters of the kings were, many times, made of gold and precious stones. This staff represented power and authority. It could bring death or it could bring life. In the book of Esther, if the queen was not extended the scepter when she came into King Xerxes' chambers without being called, she would have been killed. The king's staff was a divine symbol of life and death.

Today, we have borrowed from the word "**staff**" to include employees of an organization. Members of a "**staff**" are, in an ancient sense, the jewels that are inlaid into the staff. Together,

they represent the authority of the organization. The owner of the organization **LEANS** heavily on those that support him and the vision. In a very real sense, we are God's staff in the earth realm today. He is relying on us to accomplish His will and forward the agenda of His "organization."

But what does all this have to do with the month of Elul?

As many of you already know, the first coming of the Messiah revolved around the Spring Feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Shavuot (Pentecost). The second coming will revolve around the final three feasts of Yom Teruah (The Feast of Trumpets), Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement), and Sukkot (The Feast of Tabernacles). Because Yom Teruah, better known as Rosh Hashanah, is the first major feast of the fall and is when Messiah will come for His Bride, Elul is used as a time of preparation for this universe-changing event. Let's unpack this word "Elul" and see what the actual Paleo Hebrew can tell us.

Elul is spelled *aleph, lamed, vav, lamed*. In the original hieroglyphic of the pictograph Hebrew, aleph was an ox head that had the meaning of "strength of the leader/strong leader." Lamed was a shepherd's staff that meant "to goad, instruct, guide, lead through instruction, Torah, authority." And finally, the vav was a nail or a peg that held things securely in place or connected something to something else. It meant "nail, connect, bridge, secure, hold in place." When you put all this together, the ancient meaning of this word is "the strong leader (Yahweh) corrects with His instructions in order to reconnect and fully secure His people back under His staff of authority."

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and gentle instruction." --2 Timothy 4:2

Bottom line? This preparation time before Rosh Hashanah is designed for us to be corrected and to reconnect with Him. We are to come out from being our own authority to being under His authority. It's a time for us to stop doing things OUR way and to start doing things HIS way.

What's interesting in the Hebrew is that Elul has two lameds. This tells us that there are two staffs of instruction to this process.

QUESTION: What do you think these two staffs represent?

"Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren." --Deuteronomy 4:9

"But as for you, stand here by Me, and I will speak to you all the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I am giving them to possess." --Deuteronomy 5:31

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." --Deuteronomy 6:6-7

QUESTION: What do you think the two staffs are after reading those scriptures?

Based on the above scriptures (and many, many more), it's easy to see that the Law of God was meant to be our instruction manual. It is the staff of authority that Yahweh uses to show us our sin. It's interesting to note that the last letter in the Torah (the first five books of the bible) is a lamed and that the first letter is a beit. Together, they spell the Hebrew word "heart," and in Paleo Hebrew it means "the instructions of the house." The Torah is the instructions of the House of God.

When you think of a heart, you automatically think of the word "love." In Hebrew, love is "**Ahav**" - spelled *aleph, hey, beit* - and in its hieroglyphic form it means "*the strong leader brings revelation to the house.*" A good leader reveals the heart of the house - the instructions - so that there will be true revelation or love. True love and connection with God is when His instruction manual is fully revealed in our lives.

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." --1 John 5:2-3

QUESTION: Now that we know what the first staff is, what do you think the second staff is?

"For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." -- Luke 12:12

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to remembrance all things that I said to you." --John 14:26

The second staff is none other than the Ruach Hakodesh Himself! The first staff is the black fire, the plain text, and the second is the white fire, the Spirit behind the black text that makes it come alive. It's one thing to have an instruction manual. It's quite another to have a personal tutor to teach you what it means and how to apply it. This is the power of the supernatural lamed of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Where the first staff of instruction is on the outside, the second finds its root deep on the inside, guiding, convicting, and drawing the true meaning of the written instructions up from the deep and into plain sight.

The power of these two sticks cannot be underestimated. We do not only see a clear allusion to the two sticks of Israel (the two Houses) in Ezekiel 37, but we also see that they were originally meant to be one in the Lead Shepherd's hands. The Truth and the Spirit are not really separate. They only appear separate from our perspective because we have been the ones to separate them. He has one Word and it is filled with Spirit **AND** Truth. A real leader leads with the perfect balance of the two.

We can also see a powerful picture of the two staffs in one of the most popular chapters in all the bible: *Psalms 23*. Let's read the first part together:

"The LORD is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

QUESTION: Why does the rod and the staff comfort the speaker?

These two sticks are symbols of correction and protection. The psalmist knows that even though he walks through the most difficult and most dangerous grounds where his very life could be at risk, he understand that as long as His Shepherd has those two sticks in his hands, he is free from all harm. Whether His master has to correct him, to bring him out of harm's way, or use the staff as a weapon against his enemies, the staffs (*lameds*) are what keeps him connected (*vav*) to His Great Shepherd.

The two staffs are simply designed to lead us back to Him. Take the Torah away and the Holy Spirit has little to use to keep you connected to the Father. Take the Holy Spirit away and we have a set of instructions that are stagnant, plain, and have little life or meaning. It is only when we combine the Spirit and the Truth, the two staffs of Elul, that we truly become real worshippers. When you pull the *lameds* out of the word Elul, you have in the Paleo, *"The strong leader connects."* The problem is that we have no idea what He is connecting us to or how He is going to do it. But when we add in the two *lameds*, we know exactly what He is trying to connect us to: ***the Spirit and the Truth!***

So if you find yourself in the valley of the shadow of death, be comforted by His rod of correction and his staff of protection. Submit to His right hand and do exactly as He says and **THEN** He will "prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies, [and] anoint your head with oil." Mercy and goodness will follow you everywhere and you will dwell in the house of the **LORD** forever...just like the rest of *Psalms 23* says.

Shalom!
Jim Staley