

Session 198

Ha'azinu – New Week! New Year! New Life!

6 October 2024

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TdJSsfkNO7k>

Jeremy

Shalom everybody, welcome to the Land of Israel Fellowship, can you hear me? Is everything ok? I'm trying a new system out. Yeah? Great, ok, excellent! Welcome to everyone here, I love seeing all of your beautiful faces. Welcome to all of our new members joining us in the Land of Israel Fellowship. Shana tovah u'metuka, may everyone here be blessed with a good and sweet year. And, I've been thinking a lot about that lately. Why do we say, "May you be blessed with a good and sweet year?" I think that's pretty unique to almost any culture in the world. It's happy new year, merry Christmas, in Hong Kong they give you a little bit of money at the new year. Each culture has the way that they say have a good year.

And in the Jewish tradition, the ancient Jewish custom is to wish people a good and sweet year. A shana tovah u'metuka. And it's like a sacrifice, meaning when there's a sacrifice in the Temple, there's an idea that's so deep that people want to dramatize it, they want to make sure that they get it, they want to act it out so that they really internalize the message. And have a good and sweet year is such a profound Jewish idea that people make little sacrifices in their homes, and they dramatize this act. They take the apple, and they cut it up, and they dip it into the honey, and then they say to themselves, "May the God of our forefathers bless us with a good and sweet year." And every Jew around the world, no matter how far away they are from Judaism, no matter how far away they are from Israel, everyone has celebrated this idea and they dramatize it in such a way for hundreds, thousands of years, have a good and sweet year. What's that all about?

And so, you all know that I fell off a horse. And that was very painful. But I want you to know, that everything that HaShem does, is always for the good. That really is the Jewish idea. Everything is always for the good. We look back at last year of October 7<sup>th</sup>, we see falling off a horse, I busted my head, I broke my leg. I don't understand the mysteries of God, but I know that everything that was, was truly for the good. But we bless each other that we have a good and sweet year. That the goodness should be revealed to us, that it shouldn't be hidden goodness, that it should be a goodness that's sweet. So we bless everyone obviously with a good year, but we bless everyone with a good and sweet year. That that goodness should be manifest in the sweetest way possible.

And so, with that, I want to bless everyone with a good and sweet year. And the truth is, I really can't imagine my life anymore without this Fellowship. I mean, our learning, our prayers, our work together in Israel, and now we've launched the new Judean Book Club. I mean, learning together, almost every day, preparing for these High Holy Days, learning the writings of Rav

Kook, the first chief rabbi of Israel about tshuvah, that's completely changed my tsuvah this time of year. And the feedback that I've gotten so far from so many Fellowship members is that it's really been impactful to our Fellowship as well.

And when I think about it, that the Torah that we study together, on Sundays throughout the week, it really is a Torat Chayim, it's a Torah of life. It's not just an intellectual exercise, or new understandings of different commentaries of how to understand the Torah. What we're learning here in the Fellowship is really aimed at the heart. It's aimed at changing our lives and making us better people and helping us draw closer to HaShem.

And Rav Kook teaches, what is so clear once it's already articulated, but until he wrote it down, I felt like it was just sort of intuitively we may have understood it, but now I get it totally. But Torah and tshuvah are absolutely interconnected because the Torah that we study isn't just studied like we study Korean history. It's literally studying the ways of our soul, it's studying the depths of the spiritual mechanics of the universe. It's studying Torah in order to make us better people. And so, the more a person studies Torah, the more inspired he is to do tshuvah, and the more a person purifies and prepares himself through tshuvah, then the more the Torah is able to impact their being and serve as the blessing in their life.

And that's also why I love taking the time and praying together as a Fellowship. Because tefillah, prayer, is really what opens up the channels of Divine assistance. I mean, for the Torah to make the long journey from our head all the way down into our hearts, we have to pray for that. It's not that I want to, I don't know, I want to impress my friends. I really want to make an impression on my heart.

And when I was praying this Rosh Hashanah, I spent hours and hours in our House of Prayer, praying. And there's ancient liturgy that's so old...I was actually trying to research how old it is because so much of the liturgy is said in Morocco and Yemen, and some is the same liturgy that was said in Germany and Poland, meaning it's so ancient it predates the exile. But I couldn't help but feel that as I was praying these words over and over again in the silent prayer of Rosh Hashanah, I felt like I was praying for our Fellowship.

And this is the prayer that I want to say together with us. I'm going to read from the Machzor, from the ancient siddur of those times. And here's what it says. Because I actually discovered what our Fellowship is while I was praying on Rosh Hashanah. And so this is what came to me on the first day in the morning when I was praying these ancient words:

**וּבְכֵן** *And so, too, O HASHEM, our God, instill Your awe upon all Your works, and Your dread upon all that You have created. Let all works revere You and all creatures prostrate themselves before You. Let them all become a single society, to do Your will wholeheartedly. For as we know, HASHEM, our God, that the dominion is Yours, might is in Your hand and strength is in Your right hand, and Your Name inspires awe over all that You have created.*

**וּבְכֵן** *And so, too, O HASHEM, grant honor to Your people, praise to those who revere You, good hope to those who seek You, and eloquent speech to those who hope to You; gladness to Your land and joy to Your city; flourishing pride to David, Your servant, and preparation of a lamp for the son of Jesse, Your anointed — speedily, in our days.*

And as I was reading that, I couldn't help but feel like that is the description of our Fellowship, that people from all around the world will create a single society. I was always wondering when I named the Fellowship, I was trying to translate the word chabura, which is kind of like a group learning together. But a chabura is maybe, 10, 20, 30 people. That's how the Fellowship started. But now it's grown to something so much larger than that. In Hebrew, it's actually called an agudah, it's called a society, it's called a community, it's a much larger movement. And I think that our Fellowship is manifesting the prayer that all of God's creation will come together in a single agudah, in a single society to do Your will wholeheartedly, and hopefully prepare the way for Mashiach.

And so I was reading this prayer, and I couldn't help but as I was praying these prayers, I really felt like all of us together were praying those prayers through our mouths and through our lives. And so, what can I say? This year is going to be an amazing year. I feel it in my bones. If last year was the year of October 7<sup>th</sup>, it will always probably be remembered as a year of war. This year is going to be a year of victory.

And last week, we saw Iranian missiles. And to say that my children were scared as the sirens went off around our Farm...I mean last night, my six-year-old, Chen, had a nightmare that terrorists were coming to kill her. And she had to jump into bed with Tehila. So I can almost imagine what these kids are going through, it's like having to live with Gaza in the south, and Chezbollah in the north, and Iranian rockets that are raining over us.

And as the rockets, 181 ballistic missiles were shot, right above our heads practically, I mean they came in from Iran, so we could just see all of them come in. It was a spectacle, it was spectacular, really. And I was fortunate enough to be outside guarding my home to catch the marvel above my head in my home in Judea. And Tehila said that in my video, my response was priceless. Because I didn't think that it was Gog u'Magog, even though I think half of Israel was getting ready. I just wanted to share with you for those who haven't seen it, here is the live footage from the Arugot Farm of the largest ballistic attack in world history, here above Judea.



This is right over my house right now. Look at that, these are actual missiles that are being shot onto Israel. Look, they're right here, they're all around my house here in Judea. It's pretty unbelievable. Is this Gog u'Magog? No, not really, not yet. But we're getting really close.

And it was just such an amazing night because I feel like the evil Iran threw its worst at us. And at this point, nothing is going to stop Israel. The train has left the station, and this year we are going to be victorious. And I really wasn't nervous at all.

But, I'll tell you the truth. There were two reasons why. First, I was like, who is going to shoot a rocket onto an empty mountain in the desert with a bunch of horses...like they're going to shoot at large, populated cities. No one is shooting at the Arugot Farm at a mountain in the desert. And, the second one is it just didn't feel like war. I mean, America was saying, "Iran will launch an attack in 12 hours." Then America came out saying, "Iran will launch an attack in 4 hours, in 2 hours. Iran is launching at attack."

And then, it takes 12 minutes for the missiles to go from Iran to Israel. And that's just not the way to wage a war. I just felt like there was some puppet master here that was calling the shots.



But what I did see, and I only saw this the next day, was as I was outside filming the spectacle above my head, right next to our Farm in Metzad, which is literally just a few minutes away, a huge piece of shrapnel fell next to our Farm where you can actually see Ibei Hanachal in the picture. Ibei Hanachal is the little village next to me. And I'm like, "I don't know, I guess that maybe the shrapnel, as the Iron Dome is shooting those missiles down, I guess it could have fallen on me." But, baruch HaShem, I am safe, my children are safe, Tehila is safe, and it was quite a marvelous thing.

But I want you to know, marvelous really isn't strong enough word. Because what we experienced was truly miraculous. I made this short video that I want to share with you now, just to articulate. Because the video went viral for just a little bit, and then the world sort of moved on. But as I watched it, I couldn't believe my own eyes because it was as if there was a manifest miracle before our very eyes. And so, I just want you to see this video I made earlier today, special for the Fellowship. Check this out.



One of the most marvelous things about creation is the exact harmony and balance that allows for free will. On one hand, you can look at the world and see God. On the other hand, you can blink twice and say, "Is all this just random?" And the perfect balance allows for the ultimate free will. But every once in awhile, God breaks his own rules and there's a splitting of the Red Sea and something marvelous happens. And then, just a few days later, the Jewish people that just experienced that amazing miracle are like, "Is God really with us here in the desert? Where's the water?"



And what happened a few days ago as 181 ballistic missiles were shot unto Israel, many of them were just blowing up right over my head on the Arugot Farm. All of a sudden, the only person that was killed from that Iranian attack was a terrorist that had infiltrated into the Land of Israel from Gaza. You can't make this up, but when you see the video, and you see the perfect timing as he's walking. Had he stopped and just scratched his head, had he walked a little bit faster, it wouldn't have happened. But that means that as the missile was coming from all the way from Iran, hundreds of kilometers away, and then the Iron Dome intercepts it in midair, and then the shrapnel falls directly on the Iranian-backed terrorist, the only person killed by Iran was the person that was fighting for Iran. And you can't make this up, you just have to see the wonder of God. And the people that still say, "Oh, God, He doesn't exist," good luck. The farther we go into this year, the more and more glory will be given to God. Just get ready.

Now I know that you saw that video and it's just astounding, but I watched that video I don't know how many times because I just do a short clip of it. How a random person is walking all by himself and the one person that was killed by this Iranian attack was a terrorist from Gaza that is a friend of Iran, being backed by Iran, infiltrated into Israel from Gaza. I mean, I'm not a mathematician, but the statistics are overwhelming that that was the finger of God. There's no other way to say it. But I'm telling you that happened right before Rosh Hashanah, and to me, that was an absolute sign that we are going to experience signs and wonders this year. We're going to see things that we've never seen before. We're going to see Israel victorious in a way

that we've never seen before. And I'm really curiously excited entering into this year and seeing what God has in store and what Israel has in store.

And so, with that, I want to pass off the baton to my partner in crime, Ari. And I know that he has a message to share about Rosh Hashanah and to share from his heart and to sort of tap everyone into the authentic experience of what it's like celebrating these biblical feasts in our biblical homeland. In Judea as a Jew there is no other way to experience these days, in these times. And so, to allow everyone around the world to sort of tap into that energy and experience, I think there's no one better to do it than Ari. So, Ari, take it over.

Ari

Thank you, Jeremy. I don't know if I'm going to be tapping into the general experience, but definitely my experience. I'm listening to this story...you shared your experience with the missiles coming in from Iran. And the truth is, that on my piece that I was planning on sharing, the play by play of the Iranian attack on Israel from my perspective. Because I was also outside, I was patrolling. And you know the missiles are shot at us from Iran, from the east. And being that we're on the southeastern tip of Judea, we're the first in the country to greet these fiery rockets as they enter the airspace of the Holy Land. We see the reflection over the Dead Sea. And what I experienced that night is something I will never forget as long as I live. But maybe I'll share that next week.

I wanted to use our time together and I hope wisely, but it's just something I wanted to share. I wanted to share something else, something more personal that I experienced on Rosh Hashanah, and Jeremy I think that you know exactly what I'm about to share. You're with me Jeremy? Can you hear me? Ok, I hope that you can hear me. Anyways, so you remember, the last words for those who were in the Fellowship last week, the last words I shared at the end of the Fellowship were words of blessing that we should be successful over Rosh Hashanah in coronating HaShem as the King. Not only King over the whole world in a sort of cosmic, massive, gargantuan, larger than us way, but perhaps even more importantly in our own hearts. Give me a thumbs up if you remember this blessing I gave you.

Ok, so you know I said that one of the ways that we can do this on like a practical level is by lovingly accepting everything that happens to us, all that happens to us over the holiday. Particularly the things that we didn't think or expect should have happened to us over Rosh Hashanah because it never fully turns out how you think it should or how you wish it would. It just doesn't go that way. Well I had no idea the degree to which I was blessing myself with that particular blessing. I had no idea how important that blessing would be for me, personally.

So here's the story I want to share with you and I sort of want to bring you on the journey with me the way it happens. And I hope when you hear it it's as worthy for you to hear as it was for me to experience. So it's no secret that I love the shofar. I mean, there have been many great

moments, particularly over the last few years where I've stood on my balcony and powerfully sounded the shofar over the hills of Judea. As a matter of fact, the Jerusalem Post, whenever they talk about aliyah, most of the time, they take a picture of me blowing the shofar next to an El Al flight of new immigrants that are coming down the stairs. And that's like their stock footage, is me with the shofar.

So every year on Rosh Hashanah, I sound the hundreds of notes for people that couldn't make it to synagogue, particularly women that needed to stay home with the kids, or whatever it is. I've sounded the shofar at old age homes before, for many different groups. True is, I'm pretty confident with it. Now as you know, we at the Arugot Farm are quite close with the nearby community of Ibei Hanachal. They're the closest I've ever had to a real community that I live in. So the day before the holiday, my friend, Sachi, who organizes their prayers, called me and told me that Yoni, who is the regular, community shofar blower year after year, he's incredible, he was called up to the army and he's in Lebanon this year. Hopefully he's blowing the shofar for them. So they wanted to know if I could be a back-up in case Shlomi, the guy who's going to sound the shofar this year, was called up to the army and he couldn't make it.

Now I've never sounded the shofar in this sort of very lofty and esteemed, official capacity in the synagogue. But when I'm called upon, I try to say yes, I try to say, "Yes." So I responded, "Hineni." Here I am. And so I brought the shofar, I walked the 20 minute walk to Ibei Hanachal, to the nearby village. And it turns out that Shlomi was there and ready to blow. But everybody seemed to be really excited to have me do it as well, including Shlomi. So they decided to have us divide it up. I told them that there was no need to, I went to Shlomi and said, "You do it, I was just here as a back-up to you." But they really seemed to have their hearts set on it. They were just being kind and gracious. That's just the type of people that they are, and so they wanted to have me have the opportunity to do it, to such an honor.

Ok, so let me set the stage here. Ok? Prayers on Rosh Hashanah start in the morning at around 7:30 a.m. And about 10:15, after the Shacharit service, the synagogue takes a 15 minute break before the blowing of the shofar, to give people an opportunity to go home, to make kiddush, to have a cookie or something. And then everyone...I mean EVERYONE reconvenes in the synagogue to hear the shofar blow. There's no one left at home. Man, woman, child, guest, everybody convenes in the synagogue, standing room only. They're all standing there with baited breath for the shofar. It's the most intense and powerful moment, arguably of the year. Is the stage set?

Ok, so as the moment approached, I was praying fervently. I had never done before, I felt the magnitude of the moment, I prayed to HaShem saying, "HaShem, please empty me of my ego and let me be a vessel through which I and this holy sweet community coronate You as King. HaShem, please let me be worthy, and if HaShem, if it's not in Your will that I should be successful, then let my name, my ego, my reputation, my dignity, whatever it is, let it be a

sacrifice to You. This is sort of an ancient prayer that I say in moments of truth before a big moment in my life. And so, from my heart I expressed that.

Because you have to understand, it is not always smooth. I can remember many times in my life that the shofar blower of the congregation struggles, sputters. A friend of mine told me today that in his congregation growing up, they regularly had to switch people out. But you know, it can often be a challenging thing. And I know when it happens, that I wince. You know I know that everybody winces, it's just the most natural thing to do. It's hard to see someone struggling like that. And so the rabbi who would be calling up the notes, a very holy and pious man whom I love, his name is Rav Amnon, he signaled to me that I should make the blessing, which I did with all of my heart.

And the moment had arrived. And he announced, "Tekia!" The primary note, the longest note. And I started blowing and it wasn't coming smoothly like it usually does, I was sputtering. But I thought, "Ok, I just need to adjust the positioning in my mouth, turn the shofar around and get my bearings." And I struggled. And then came out a very powerful tekia blast, baruch HaShem, thank God. At least, this was my experience, you tell me, Jeremy, if you're listening. You know, it's hard for me to remember exactly how it went. And then he said, "Shevarim, teruah," which is supposed to sound like this, "doo ooh, doo ooh, doo ooh, tu tu tu tu tu tu tu tu. Right? And I was able to sound those with relative success. And then...tekiah, and I believe I sounded that one powerfully as well. But then...the next note, we're only like 20% through it. The next note, the next tekia, it simply wouldn't sound. I struggled, I blew the shofar with all that I had, all you could hear was...ooof...I mean it wouldn't sound. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Jeremy's son, Akiva, wincing. Just as I would have been. And I tried and I tried, and my lungs were out, and my mouth was exhausted. And I tried so hard that for the sake of the congregation I felt like it was the right thing to hand it over to Shlomi, which I did. Jeremy, you there, you listening? You listening, Jeremy? Anyways, maybe he's not, he's not able to hear.

Anyways, Shlomi knocked it out of the park. I mean, it was perfect and beautiful. And I just stood there next to him, with my eyes closed, being in shock, disbelief, and absolute embarrassment about what just happened. You know, but fighting to put myself aside and let the sound of the shofar course through my body and my soul, which I'm grateful I was able to do for the most part, considering the circumstances. I then went to my seat and stood there for a moment, feeling a degree of embarrassment that I don't think that I've ever felt before in my life.

You know, Jerry Seinfeld jokes that according to the polls, the greatest fear that people have, a fear greater than death, the number one greatest fear is the fear of public speaking because of the potential embarrassment which could result. Meaning he says that most people would actually rather be the person in the box at the funeral than the person giving the eulogy. Well, the degree of embarrassment that I felt at that moment was overwhelming, beyond anything



that I had ever known, for maybe a minute, I think even less. Because just as the dust settled just a little bit, within that very first moment, I gathered myself and I said, "Thank You, HaShem," and then again, and then by the third or fourth time, with my whole essence, I was declaring, "Thank You, HaShem, thank You, HaShem." I actually said the words out loud in a whisper, but in actual words I said, "Thank You, HaShem, thank You, HaShem." It's not that the embarrassment was gone, not at all, it was there. But with my whole heart, for reasons that I didn't even understand at the time, I was thanking HaShem for it.

Maybe it was like on some level, all of these Fellowships were practice and this was the moment of truth. Had the truth that we learn together every week really penetrated my heart? Have they really penetrated from my head to my heart, into my essence that I can apply them and live that in a moment of truth? And I'm grateful to all of you, and I'm grateful to HaShem to say, "Very much yes." I don't know the degree, how to rate it, how to grade it, but I said, I closed my eyes and I said, "HaShem, You're the King. You decide what is good and what is bad and if that's the way You want it, my shofar blowing to go, then thank You. You're the King."

Again, I won't say that the embarrassment went away, because it didn't. But my experience of it radically changed. As the blood was rushing from my face, it felt like an ego death on some level. It felt like cleansing. The truth is, that it's still new and it's still fresh and so the dust is still settling. But I realized right then that I was experiencing a uniquely precious moment in my life. And I felt filled with gratitude that HaShem was giving me the consciousness and the awareness and perhaps the courage to harness it for the great moment of opportunity that it was. You know, perhaps I didn't succeed in coronating HaShem in the way that I wanted to, or in the conventional way that it usually happens. But I felt like perhaps I was able to coronate HaShem in the way that He wanted me to. To coronate Him in my heart. I was not filled with regret or protest or humiliation or, "Why did I do this or why did I say this or why were they telling me to do it?" I mean, there were still to be waves of embarrassment to come. I'm still having that.

But I stood there for the duration of the service and experienced Rosh Hashanah like I've never experienced it before. And a teaching that I had learned years ago rushed forth into my mind. A teaching from Rebbe Nachman. That one who is embarrassed or shamed in public and they don't defend themselves, or object to the humiliation, that they are not vexed by the affront to their honor. That the embarrassment provides a spiritual atonement of the highest degree. And I felt that. It felt like a mikveh, like a spiritual bath was washing over me.

And immediately the words of our daily prayers rushed into my heart. That HaShem humbles the haughty and He raises up the humble. And like I said last week, I don't want to be let off the hook. I want the correction. And so I felt grateful in my heart for this humbling. You know for burning whatever haughtiness was in me, right out of me. Because there are times people come out to the Farm, this is something I experience a lot. And they see the beauty and the magnitude and the incredible...it's one of the most beautiful places in the country. And they

look at me and they're like, "Wow, what a pioneer, and what a builder!" And I tell them, "You know, it's not me. I said, 'hineni,' and HaShem did this and it's a miracle of God. And I didn't do it." But I still feel that honor and that's inflatedness that happens. There's almost nothing I can do about it.

And you know, this was just burning all of it out of me. And I really felt like at that moment, a wave like I'm nothing. I really felt that, I'm really nothing, like in a good way. You know without HaShem's help, I can't even sound a shofar! You know, and I was so humbled and it was painful, but it's a pain which I felt at that moment...at the moment, not when I left the world and looked back at the moment, but at the moment, it felt like a pain that I wouldn't trade for anything.

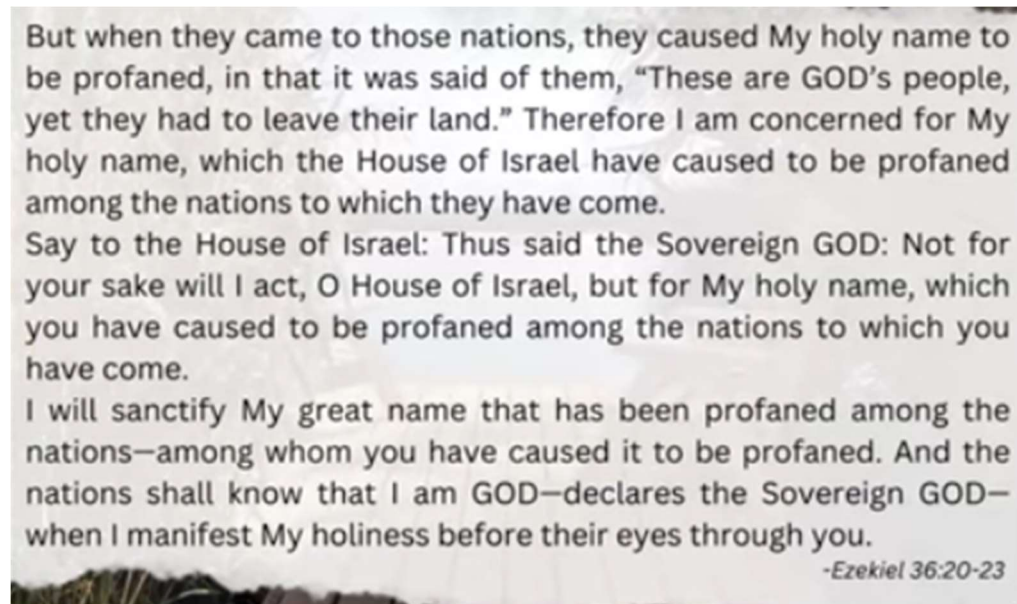
And so, I walked home, knowing that what just happened would most likely be the table talk at most lunch tables in that village. Right? If not, all of them. Not in a negative or a gossipy way at all. You can't gossip about it. Everybody was there, right? It's not in that way, people like me in that village, I really feel like that. I know that they like me because I like them so much. After all, I'm the candy man. Who doesn't like the candy man? And I give out organic lollypops, not that stuff with all the chemicals. The mothers are grateful for it. Everybody likes the candy man. But people would be talking about it and most likely feeling bad for me. But you know what? That was ok by me. Part of me was even happy that I could give them something to feel compassionate over because compassion is a holy emotion, it's a godly emotion. So that is a good feeling for them, to be feeling on Rosh Hashanah.

And I remember just feeling grateful that HaShem was allowing me to experience this whole event in such a compassionate way. Since then I've spoken to people in the village and they said, "How are you doing, Ari?" And I said, "How would you have felt if that was you?" And all of them, they're like, "Devastated," like "Devastated!" Everyone was saying how devastated they would be, how hard they would take that. I mean, there's like falling short and there's like cataclysmic. I mean it was...and so, on the way back home, I was reflecting on the consequences that this could have on my name and my reputation. Are people going to look at me differently?

And I began to think of the terrible ways that HaShem's Name has been desecrated and dragged through the mud this past year, throughout the last 2,000 years. So as the destruction of the Temple, but even just this past year, because you know when the nation of Isreal was raped and beheaded and murdered. When God's people were so viciously desecrated and defiled, His Name experienced all of that with us. His Name was desecrated and defiled along with our own.

Because as we know, the Name of the nation of Israel and the God of Israel are intertwined. Even our exile itself. The fact that it still exists, the fact that there are still Jew in the Diaspora

after the gates of return have been opened, that in and of itself is a desecration of His Name. As we read in chapter 36 of the book of Ezekiel:



But when they came to those nations, they caused My holy name to be profaned, in that it was said of them, "These are GOD's people, yet they had to leave their land." Therefore I am concerned for My holy name, which the House of Israel have caused to be profaned among the nations to which they have come.  
Say to the House of Israel: Thus said the Sovereign GOD: Not for your sake will I act, O House of Israel, but for My holy name, which you have caused to be profaned among the nations to which you have come.  
I will sanctify My great name that has been profaned among the nations—among whom you have caused it to be profaned. And the nations shall know that I am GOD—declares the Sovereign GOD—when I manifest My holiness before their eyes through you.  
-Ezekiel 36:20-23

Through you!  
Through us!  
When our name is elevated, His Name is elevated. And when our name is brought low, His Name is brought low.

And so, it hit me deep in my heart that after much

degradation that HaShem's Name has experienced this past year, the embarrassment that I felt was less than nothing. It was like the least, the least I can do.

Anyways, so after Shabbat ended, I sent a message to the WhatsApp group of the settlement telling them that I've learned that I'm not yet a congregational shofar blower. And I apologized to them that I needed to learn that lesson at their expense. I know that I probably didn't need to write them this message, to the whole group of everybody, but I just wanted to address it so it just didn't go unspoken about indefinitely. And of course, they responded graciously with hearts and other nice emoji's. My friend, Yosef, he brought me cookies that night to make me feel better. I think many people were simply projecting upon me how they would feel and relating to me from that place which is very human and very kind of them.

And Jeremy, also, when I came down from blowing the shofar, and my head was still spinning, Jeremy said, "It was the best shofar I've ever heard, I've ever heard! It was the best! And then after he took over, it was just no good." And I said, "Jeremy, I can't listen to you!" He's my best friend. He's trying to make me feel better. It was hard for me to accept that. I really didn't accept that from Jeremy. But then I received this message from my dear friend, Meir. I just want to play the beginning of it for you.

He said:

"Ari, I wanted to say thank you. Because the moment in which you blew the shofar was the most meaningful moment of my entire Rosh HaShana. In truth, I really felt your heart when you sounded the Tekia - and then when you got stuck - my heart simply broke - it was simply the most meaningful moment and it filled me with strength for the entire year. I know you wrote that message of apology as if things didn't work out - but as far as I'm concerned it was the best and did exactly what it was supposed to do in my heart - so thank you!"

-- Meir Yanniger

So that's what Meir said, and I know him, and he's a sincere man, he's a simple man, he's a man of truth, such a holy, spiritual guy and I know that he really meant that. And I said to myself, "You know, if something is from your heart, it goes into the heart." And we may not understand how or why, but I just wanted to share that with you and that's my story and I wanted to share this with you because you know it was

a moment of significance in my life and I consider this Fellowship like family.

But also because going forward into these days of atonement, I want to bless us to remember that HaShem is the King. But what's so special about this King, is that not only is He our King and the King of the universe, but He's our Father and He loves us and He formed us in the womb, and He knows us far better than we know ourselves. And He knows what is best for us, and He knows what we need. And so I bless us that we're able to receive His corrections with humility and love and the knowledge that the greatest pain of our lives and the hardest challenges in our lives are nothing other than the greatest and most perfectly orchestrated opportunities that God has designed for us to return to Him, to come close to Him, and to grow in exactly the way that we need to grow during our very fleeting and precious time in this world. And with that, my friends, allow me to bless you and all of us that we should be sealed in the Book of Life, health, happiness, and closeness to God, every moment of our lives. Amen.

Back to you, Jeremy.

Jeremy

Alright, shalom! Is everyone ok, can everyone hear this? Is this working? Good, excellent. I want you to know, that with a broken foot I walked all the way to the village to hear Ari's shofar being blown. And I want you to know it was the holiest part of my whole Rosh Hashanah. I didn't even know that all of that drama was unfolding because most of that drama was in Ari's head. I had my tallit over my head and I was just listening and to me it was the most courageous moment that I had seen in Ari for a long time. He's not a professional shofar blower, what's he doing in front of the whole synagogue blowing the shofar? So he stood up and did it and I was just thrilled at the whole encounter. And for me it was the highlight of my Rosh Hashanah. As soon as Ari stopped, some other guy took his place, and it was like, "Doo...." and it was like a robot. There was like nothing happening there. It was like Ari's was so heartfelt and so beautiful, it was the highlight of my Rosh Hashanah. That's the first thing.

The second thing you need to know, underneath everyone in Israel there is a superhero. There's actually a song now that was based on a WhatsApp that I actually made a video of during the war that my son's bible teacher is actually a tank commander and my teller in the bank is an officer in intelligence and everyone in Israel is actually really a superhero. And they have a little box in their room and then when the duty called, they take out their superhero cape, their IDF uniform, and they go out to save the world, and everyone in Israel are superheroes.

And in the terror attack that happened right before the Iranian ballistic missile onslaught, I saw the video footage and it looked like a man with long, hippie hair and flip flops running to stop the terrorists. And he ultimately stopped the terrorist. And it turns out that this guy was the head of the Burning Man festival in Israel. Meaning he is the most hippie kind of person you could imagine in Israel. And yet, this guy happened to have a gun on him and he ran after the terrorist in flip flops and shorts with his long, flowing hair behind him and took out the terrorist and saved everyone's life. And so, really and truly, everyone underneath is a superhero. The problem with Ari is that everything underneath is on his sleeve, it's like you can see everything, everything is so transparent. There's no hiding, he just reveals himself as a superhero.

But it's my job to actually introduce you to the real superhero of the story. And that is, of course, Tehila Gimpel. She is here to wish you a shana tovah u'metukah, and to share some insight into this kind of transitional period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. And what we really should be thinking about after the unbelievable experience we've had on Rosh Hashanah, and now we're sort of charting our path to Yom Kippur in the beginning of this New Year. So with that, I would love to introduce to you my superhero, Tehila.

Tehila

Hi everybody, so good to see you, so good to see your beautiful faces, I hope everybody had a great Rosh Hashanah. So I want to talk today about Yom Kippur that we have coming up this coming Shabbat. Now, we started talking about this last week a little bit. I mentioned how every biblical holiday has something that happened, some historical event behind it. You know, not every great event gets a holiday, but every holiday seems to have a great event. So last week we talked about what was Rosh Hashanah, is the creation of man and the remembrance of Noah.

So I wanted today to talk about what was the historic event of Yom Kippur? So the Torah doesn't spell it out for us. Do you guys want to write in the comments, does anybody know what happened on Yom Kippur? So, it's actually a bit of a calculation. The sages tell us that on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Tishrei, which is Yom Kippur, that was the day...exactly, Laura you got it right, great job, Laura gets a prize. So, we got the 2<sup>nd</sup> tablets. Now how do we get to that calculation? It's a bit of math that we need to do. If we know that on Shavuot we received HaShem's revelation at Sinai. That was the 6<sup>th</sup> day of Sivan. So we imagine that as the day of revelation. After that, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Sivan, Moshe goes up for 40 days and then we know that he comes

down and sees this horrible desecration of the worship of the golden calf. That's 40 days later, so that will come out to actually be on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the next month of Tammuz, which we know is going to be a tragic day, the 17<sup>th</sup> day of Tammuz is a tragic day throughout Jewish history. And that first tragedy actually happened when Moshe broke the Tablets. Then Moshe goes out to clear out the camp and to purify the camp and to find all the people who were responsible. Then, in Deuteronomy 9, we know that Moshe says that for 40 days, at that point, he sort of thrusts himself at HaShem's mercy and begged for us to be forgiven. And so that would actually come out, if you do the math, on the very last day of the month of Av. And then, HaShem says, "Ok, you can make new tablets, come up to me for another 40 days."

And so, if you actually calculate that, that starts on the first day of Elul and goes until he comes back down with the new tablets on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Tishrei. So if you'd actually follow the math of 40 and then 40 and then another 40, from the original revelation, you come out to this unbelievable discovery that those 40 days that Moshe was up on Sinai for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time atoning for us and creating these new tablets, in a collaboration with HaShem, then that was actually the month of Elul and the ten days of tshuvah.

So as my son Noam says, he says, "Blow-minding," that is mind-blowing when we think about it because what does that mean? Can you imagine what it was like when Moshe was up on the mountain? Like they didn't know what was going to happen. They don't know they're going to get new tablets. The Israelites don't know what's going to happen now. Has HaShem forsaken us? Has He not forsaken us? So, you could just imagine the depth of repentance, the depth of tshuvah that were set into that fabric of time for those 40 days. It was such powerful repentance that it actually reverberates through time to the point that it allows us in Elul and in the ten days of tshuvah, the first ten days of Tishrei, to tap into those moments of the greatest repentance that ever was. Moshe was on the mountain begging for us while we were doing our own repentance. That is the greatest repentance that ever was. They set into motion that period of time that could contain that level of repentance.

And on the last day, can you imagine the feeling of Yom Kippur, looking up and seeing Moshe coming down with a new set of tablets? Like try to imagine, that is the essence of Yom Kippur. That moment of looking up at the culmination of 40 days of repentance and looking up at the mountain and seeing the new tablets coming down.

Now, what's really interesting, I mean there are a lot of things that are interesting about that. One thing that's interesting is if Shavuot then, is the day of the real, original revelation, the sort of first love revelation at Sinai, at Shavuot. And Yom Kippur is that sort of second revelation. Now, what's interesting is that look at what opposite ways we celebrate the two times that we get the tablets. How do we celebrate Shavuot? We know now, in modern, let's say more modern tradition, that we learn Torah and we talk about the giving of the Torah, but what was it like in the times of the Temple? This was all a festival about the first fruits – coming and

celebrating, eating the fruits in holiness, just enjoying the luscious, delicious seven species of the Land and taking a bite out of a pomegranate and a bit out of a fig and a date. It's so physical.

And then what do we do on Yom Kippur? It's really the exact opposite. So, two times we're getting the tablets. One time we celebrate with the most bodily kind of celebration and on Yom Kippur, what do we do? We negate all of our physicality. We act instead of like people taking bites out of delicious fruits, we're not eating anything. We're not drinking anything. We're dressed like angels, we're acting like we don't even have a human body. So what's going on here? Isn't that strange?

So something interesting that I learned, if you think about it, the first tablets were completely made by HaShem. We know that they were carved straight through. Miraculously the letters were like floating in the tablets from side to side. They were the handiwork of God, Himself. And what does it mean to live by tablets that are coming down as the handiwork of God, Himself? You can become a completely spiritually being by living in that existence, that's just completely given to you by God. But the idea was, that you can take that godliness and infuse it into your physical life. So on Shavuot we take this complete godliness and we bring it down into our physical existence of just eating and drinking and celebrating and saying, "Even your physical existence can be done in holiness. It can be infused with godliness."

What happened on Yom Kippur? Well, who actually carved out the tablets this time? HaShem commands Moshe. Moshe carves out. He says, "You should carve out the tablets." The tablets are actually going to be made this time, the second time around. HaShem sees that we are not going to be able to live in this existence of that first original covenant of the tablets. We need new tablets that are going to be coming from our own effort, coming from some kind of human effort. So now, Moshe in his human effort actually carves out those tablets. And then what is that? What do we...it's as if it's telling us, "Well then how do we celebrate that day?" We celebrate that day by negating our physicality. We say, "You know what? We were not able to completely infuse our existence with godliness, we broke, we weren't able to handle it, right? We broke and worshipped the golden calf. We're going to now try to lift ourselves up in our own effort to be worthy of receiving the Torah. The Torah isn't just coming down to us, we are going up to try to meet HaShem in making the Torah.

So we don't have one day of receiving the Torah, we actually have two days of receiving the tablets. And they're sort of mirror opposites of one another, showing these two sides of revelation. On the one hand, bringing down HaShem's holiness into our physical existence, but at the same time, saying HaShem we're also going to meet you – this is not just something that is happening to us, we are fully participating in this and we are going to try to lift ourselves up and cancel out some of our physicality. So I thought that was kind of cool.

But then, as you guys know me, I wasn't really satisfied because something here struck me a little bit odd. Ok, let's say you have friends, ok? Not you, God forbid that this should not happen to you, but maybe it did, I don't know. Ok, you have a friend. And they fall in love, and they get married. But then, things fall apart. And they separate and they have this massive blow up and God forbid they get divorced. Maybe someone was even not faithful to the other, God forbid. Right?

And then, they decide, much begging and therapy and working on it, they decide to get together again and they're going to bury the hatchet and put away all this pain of the past, right? They're going to really try to overcome it, and they decide to get married again. Which one of their wedding days are they going to celebrate? Wouldn't they celebrate only the second wedding? I mean the first wedding ended in such a blow out. It ended up in such a disaster, it ended up in divorce, it ended up in separation and breaking of their covenant. Wouldn't the really happy day be the day that they had their second wedding?

I think that that's super strange at first sight that we celebrate both of these days of giving the tablets. We should be so ashamed of that first day of the giving of the tablets. Cause those tablets ended up broken. We're all dancing and happy on Shavuot, and taking bites out of our fruit in the Temple. Did nobody read the next chapter? Did nobody read the part where those tablets were smashed to the ground? Well, maybe there's a really deep secret here. Maybe it's teaching us, no, no, no, no, no. You do have to celebrate these two weddings. What does that mean?

There's a very, very deep teaching in the sages that says that in the ark of the covenant, inside the tabernacle in the Temple, we know that there were the tablets, right? But not everybody knows that the broken shards of the original tablets were there as well. And sometimes I think about this idea and I think it's one of the most profound possible ideas. The idea that we would maintain those broken tablets that symbolizes everything that's wrong about us, everything that's dark about us, everything that was unfaithful about us, and keep those together in the Holy of Holies, right next to the tablets. Can you imagine that? When you think about that, what is that trying to tell us?

You know this idea, it struck me so powerfully when my brother was getting married. This was the speech that he gave to his wife. And it didn't sound very romantic at first, but it was in the Torah portion of the breaking of the tablets. And when he got married, he said to his wife, he said, "You and I, we are building our ark. And there are things that are wonderful about us, that we love about each other, we're two tablets that are whole in some ways. But we are also two tablets that are broken in some ways." And he started saying, "You're kind of broken in this, and you do a little of this the wrong way..." And everyone started to break him off, "Ok, ok, that's enough." And he said, "No, no, no, hear me out. You're broken in this and you're broken in that, and I'm broken in these ways. But I want your broken tablets and your whole tablets



together in our ark. I love you for everything that's broken about you and I love you for everything that's whole about you. And you love me for everything that's whole and everything that's broken in me as well. We're not covering it up, we want it to be in the ark, in the Holy of Holies." Can you imagine?

And so, what are we essentially saying when we celebrate both Shavuot and Yom Kippur? And we keep the broken tablets together with the whole tablets? What is HaShem saying to us? He's saying, "When I'm renewing this covenant with you on Yom Kippur, when I'm showing you once again that I forgive you, that I love you, that I want to be together with you, that I believe in you, I'm not saying let's erase the past and let's forget about everything. I'm saying, I love you with your broken tablets, right next to the new tablets. Because we're not forgetting about everything, we're not erasing everything.

There are some people that want to erase their past. Some people want to say, "Whatever I used to be, that's gone, I'm a new person now." And HaShem is saying, "No, no, no, no. Your tshuvah that I'm accepting on Yom Kippur, I'm accepting it because I see you in your brokenness, I see the places that are wrong, but I also see the places that are good and I'm holding them together. And I love them together, and I'm forgiving you with all of that package. And I'm recommitting to you with all of that package."

You know whenever I go to a wedding, I always think that it's so beautiful and so romantic, but I enjoy myself even more at second weddings. Because you know when Jeremy and I got married, we were babies. We were idiots. And I look back at our wedding videos and it's so happy and cute. But like, we were really idiots, we didn't know what we were going into. We didn't know what lay ahead, we were not knowingly accepting upon ourselves all of that. We were unknowingly accepting upon ourselves all of that adventure that was coming.

A couple of weeks ago I went to my cousin's second wedding. I said to myself, "These two people, both of them have been through a lot." And I said, "These two people, after everything they've been through, they know exactly what it means to get married. And they're still doing it." They're letting those broken tablets and those whole tablets be together in the ark. They're like accepting upon themselves everything that they know that's going to be broken and owning that and taking that upon themselves.

So Yom Kippur is so beautiful because Shavuot is romantic and it's wonderful and it's our covenant with HaShem, but we didn't know what we were getting into. And we sure managed to mess things up. Yom Kippur is where HaShem reaccepts us and opens His arms to us, knowing everything that is wrong with us. And He says, "I am still going to give you My tablets, knowing all that I know about you."

And it's just a lesson about all of our journeys. You know a lot of people here in our group and a lot of people that we know can kind of look at their past and say, "What did I think? What did I used to believe? How could I have been so wrong? Everything I used to think was terrible. Everything I used to be was terrible." And Yom Kippur is telling us everything that you used to be is only making you richer and deeper for it.

We have a friend who converted to Judaism, and his mom came from a native American background, and so he became actually Chabad. Now try to imagine, we had them over for a meal. Try to imagine somebody with a black hat and a black jacket, long beard, looking totally like a rabbi, looking 100% like a Chabad rabbi, and Ari had the guts to say, "Could you teach us a rain dance?" And he said, "Sure!" And he's doing a rain dance for us. Now imagine, at our Shabbat table seeing a Chabad rabbi doing a traditional rain dance. You can't make this stuff up. And that is the broken tablets and the tablets together. He didn't say, forget about it. Everything that he came from only made his journey with HaShem so much richer.

And my son, Akiva said to him something so cute. My son Akiva said, "You know I once heard a mathematician explain why in the last decade there haven't been any new discoveries in mathematics. You know why? He said, "Because everyone goes to school and learns the same math books. And they have the same math teachers that learn from the same math teachers before them and everyone is learning the same thing, so no one is coming up with something new." He said, "You are bringing something new to Torah because there hasn't been a native American Chabad Rabbi yet."

And that's something new, and he was so cute that Akiva was able to recognize the beauty. And I really think that that is the message of Yom Kippur. That we are coming to HaShem and HaShem sees us for who we are. We're not saying, "HaShem, erase everything that we are, but HaShem show us the way that everything that's broken in us can fit together in the ark with everything that is good and becoming better. Put all of that together in the Holy of Holies. Love us with all of that."

And HaShem says, "Yes," and shows us on Yom Kippur these new tablets that are not made only by HaShem, and they're not made only by a human being, but by a meeting, by a marriage, by a collaboration between Moshe and HaShem where we reunite and say, "We know what this means now and we're still accepting upon ourselves this journey together."

And what's really cool, and with this I'll finish up, this I read in Netivot Shalom. He says that Yom Kippur does in fact symbolize our awakening towards HaShem, our writing out those luchot, our trying to meet HaShem and become more angelic, less physical. Shabbat on the other hand, is something that represents HaShem's pure creative power. The Shabbat is creation, it's something that was totally not done by us. Shabbat was from the 7<sup>th</sup> day of God's creation, we had nothing to do with it. HaShem makes Shabbat and whether you know it's

Shabbat or you don't know it's Shabbat, Shabbat is happening. Like with or without you it's going to be Shabbat.

And what's cool is that this year, Shabbat and Yom Kippur come out on the same day. So it's like HaShem in an even deeper way coming to meet us and we're coming and saying, "We're going to make our human efforts to come and meet You, HaShem." HaShem is saying, "It's going to be on Shabbat, on the day that I made holy." And all of that is infused together." And it fits, I think, well in the times that we're in. That we are fighting here in Israel for our lives and seeing HaShem's miracles coming and protecting us.

And so may we have that meeting together in our personal lives on Yom Kippur and on a national level, please God, let's see our efforts and our self-sacrifice and our battle that we are going up against being met by HaShem's love and HaShem's miracles coming down upon us and meeting together to lead us to both personal redemption and national redemption.

And so with that, I wish everybody to have the most meaningful Yom Kippur, Shabbat, Shabbaton, the Shabbat Yom Kippur that all of that should be experienced for you in your lives.

Jeremy

Wow! Do you guys see that? It's unbelievable, right? She is truly remarkable. I have to be married to that, that's not a simple thing to be married to when you have such a high bar. And the brilliance and the articulation. I don't know how she does it, but for me, she is the best asset in my life, the best asset of the Fellowship. I absolutely love her and I'm just thrilled that she's able to find the time each week to come and share with us.

Before we say goodbye, and I had so much more to say, but there's only so much time, I want to share with you the heart of the Jewish people right now. And it's hard because I know that so many of you are far away, what's going on? Iran, Chezbollah, Iraq, what's happening? All the Jews, are they nervous, are they scared? And I want you to know that we are right now living the spirit of King David. And what do I mean by that? Psalm 23, verse 5 says:

Prepare a table before  
me in the presence of  
my enemies;

*-Psalm 23:5*

And while all the enemies of Israel are shooting ballistic missiles on us and while they're blowing us up in the north and blowing us up in the south, and they're trying to do all this terrorism across the Land, they Jews are celebrating holiday after holiday after holiday, preparing a table and feasting and delighting in God's gift to Israel.

And I wanted to share with you one last video from one of Tehila's best friends. Her name is Malkah Fleisher. She is the wife of Yishai Fleisher, and I feel like she tapped into the spirit of

King David in the most cute funny way possible. And I want you to see her as she's preparing for Rosh Hashanah. Check this out.



This is Malkah in Judea. We've just been informed that Iran is planning to launch an imminent ballistic missile attack against the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. They're preparing and we're preparing for that. You know what else we're preparing for? A three day Rosh Hashanah holiday. Do you know how much cooking that is? Do you know how many times I've been in this grocery store over the last week? Do you know how many women are baking their challahs tonight? So help me, Iran if you knock our electricity out while our challahs are in the oven, so help me, I will gather such a flood of Jewish women and we are going to come down there and pull your missile silos down with our bare manicured hands. Ok? Hell hath no fury like Jewish women whose challahs have just flopped.

So I just love Malkah. She's just laughing at Iran and worrying about the challahs that we need to make for Rosh Hashanah. But I want to share just one last thought. And that is that we are entering into Yom Kippur. The broken parts of us, like Tehila mentioned, the shofar sounding that Ari mentioned, and all of us in our own way, all of us are broken in so many ways.

And I'll tell you, I was injured in my head, I was injured breaking my foot. My entire upper body is really shot. I'm really kind of like a broken person that's slowly but surely coming back together. I used to be able to drop down and give you 70, that was my baseline. And I was competing with a friend of mine in an elite commander unit. He's also a kick-boxing champion. I mean I'm competing with him only in my own mind. But that was sort of what I was striving for.

And my physical therapist said just last week, "Jeremy, I'd like to see you do some push-ups." And I broke on the 3<sup>rd</sup> one. And that was very devastating for me because the weights don't lie, that's what my trainer always says. Either I'm getting stronger or I'm getting weaker or I'm staying the same. The weights don't lie. And when I couldn't do three push-ups, it really broke me. And I was thinking, I'm going into this year, the weakest that I've been maybe since I was like a boy. I don't ever remember not being able to do three push-ups.

But in some ways, all of us have brokenness. And the brokenness isn't because of us. Meaning when we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah what we're saying is, "God we're making You King. In our good spots, in our bad spots. In our highs and in our lows." And right now HaShem has created us the way He has designed in our lives for this moment. And so, with that, when we come into Yom Kippur, it's to know that HaShem is guiding us along a path and even if we're broken, and even if we're weak, and even if we're still striving, HaShem loves us, our broken

parts, our whole parts and all of us together. And that really is a manifestation of HaShem echad, of HaShem's love.

And this is the happiest day of the year, that HaShem's love knows no boundaries. That forgiveness beyond forgiveness. And so, everyone that's tapped into eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel nowadays, is really being pulled by God's grace to attach themselves to the destiny of Israel. To attach themselves to the destiny of the Bible.

And we are going to experience, I believe, wonders and marvels this year. And so, I just want to bless us all with a good and sweet year, with a beautiful Yom Kippur, filled with tshuvah, a real return to ourselves, a return to the path that HaShem has destined for us to grow into who HaShem created us to be b'emet.

Alright my friends, have a wonderful week, have a beautiful year and we'll see you next Sunday. Shalom.