

Sermon for Saturday: Teshuvah תשובה

Pastor Andrew J. Manuse | First Fruits Ministries

Torah portion reading for this week: Deuteronomy 31:1-32:52; 2 Samuel 22:1-51; Hosea 14:2-10; Micah 7:18-20; Joel 2:15-27; Isaiah 55:6-56:8; John 6:26-35; Romans 10:1-17; Romans 10:17-11:12; Romans 12:19; Romans 15:9-10: <https://tinyurl.com/23jurz5n>



Shabbat shalom, Brothers and sisters. We find ourselves on Shabbat in the midst of the Days of Awe, which are a time of Teshuvah (תשובה), a time of repentance, a time when the Lord calls us to return to Him fully and then continue to walk in His ways rather than our own. I believe it's worth noting two eternal concepts that converge on this day: First, we celebrate Shabbat, a day that both Jews and Gentiles are commanded to celebrate, for the Sabbath Day is a rehearsal each week for the eternal rest promised to us when we endure in our walk with Messiah Yeshua. Second, we prepare our hearts for Yom Kippur coming up tomorrow at sunset, a day representing Judgment Day, the Day when the Lord will return and separate the wheat from the chaff; when He will collect His wheat into His barn, His eternal Kingdom, while gathering the chaff to be burned up in eternal fire. Today, we are presented with the promise of eternal life, and it is still available to each of us, so let us grasp onto this promise while it is available to us. For today we are also presented with the promise of eternal destruction, because the Last Day will come as a thief in the night and on that day all hope for salvation will end for those who have rejected the Lord. This is the age of grace; the season for repentance. This is the time to get our hearts right with Yeshua and turn toward Him in all of His ways.

Our reading from Isaiah 55 and 56 speaks about both realities.

In Isaiah 56—foretelling the coming Messiah Yeshua, the Salvation of Yahweh—the Lord's prophet exhorts all people, including the eunuch, the foreigner, and the son of

the foreigner, saying: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”

This exhortation isn't just given for the days preceding the advent of Yeshua on the earth. We know that the Lord's Salvation has certainly been revealed. We know His righteousness has come, for we have believed in the unleavened Bread from Heaven, Yeshua HaMashiach, “the bread of life,” and when we go to Him we will never hunger, and when we believe in Him we shall never thirst (John 6:26-35). We have believed in the flawless Lamb of God who has atoned for our sin, once and for all, and when we accept His sacrifice on our behalf, we become righteous before God.

But the Lord has given us warning: “Do not let the son of the foreigner, who has joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, ‘The Lord has utterly separated me from His people;’” In other words, whether we are Jew or Gentile, when we become believers in Yeshua, we ought to join together as one people who follow one God, and in following after Him we ought to keep His commandments, especially His Sabbath, and look to Him to help us walk away from evil. Evil, or darkness, is any thought, word or action that rebels against the Lord our God, and it is rebellion against Yeshua, the Lord of the Sabbath, to knowingly profane this day.

In contrast, as we read in Micah 6:8, the Lord has shown us what is good, “and what does the LORD require of [us] but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with [our] God?.”

As “sons of the foreigner[s] who join [ourselves] to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the Name of the Lord, to be His servants,” let us keep from defiling His Sabbath and hold fast the covenant of the Lord, for the Lord will bring us, and even others, to His Holy Mountain and make us joyful in His Kingdom. This is what we celebrate today. He will accept our prayers and our living sacrifice here today, and we can approach His throne, whether Jew or Gentile, when we keep the commandments of God and the faith of Yeshua (Revelation 14:12). This testimony of our faith is built on two witnesses, and they cannot be separated. Because Yeshua has saved us from sin—because Yahweh's salvation has come and His righteousness has been revealed—we are called to love His mercy through the exercise of our repentant hearts, and to walk humbly before our God by doing justly, which means to walk righteously according to His Word and His example. We must keep our foot free from evil. When our hearts are

aligned to such obedience, God will help us—He has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. Let us fear not, but walk forth in His marvelous light, for when He comes He will bring those of us who endure in Him into His eternal rest.

In Isaiah 55, the Lord's prophet exhorts us to consider the End before it comes, and to turn back to the Lord if we find ourselves lacking in even the most minor way. James 2:10 reads: "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all." On account of this, we read in Isaiah 55:6-7, "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." This is Teshuvah. The Lord can be sought today. He can be found today. He is near to those who call upon Him; He is near to those who forsake their wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts and return to Him. The Lord will have mercy on those who repent. In fact, He will abundantly pardon through the grace He offers in Yeshua. But—and this is a big caveat—in order to receive this pardon, we must seek the Lord while He may be found. We must forsake our wicked ways while we still live in this age of grace. There is soon coming a day when sinners will not be able to find Him any longer, for the time allotted for humanity to find Him will have run out.

Peter writes, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3:9-12).

What manner of persons ought we to be in holy conduct and godliness while we can still seek and find the Lord? Our Lord said, "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel!" (Mark 1:15). As the Kingdom of God draws nearer and nearer to us, in this age of grace we ought to repent and believe. We ought to rebuke our sins and the evil spirits trying to bury us in them and return to the Lord with boldness, determining in our hearts to follow Him in all of His ways.

I found that our reading in Hosea 14 addresses both of these testimonies in a powerful way. Consider verses 2, where we read: “Take words with you, and return to the Lord. Say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.” Moving on to verse 9, we read: “Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right; the righteous walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them” (Hosea 14:2, 9). What confession do we make with our lips, and how does that lead us in righteousness? Paul tells us in Romans 10: “if you confess with your mouth the Lord Yeshua and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Yes. As we’ve read in Ephesians 2:8, we are “saved by grace THROUGH faith.” Our faith is belief in God’s gift of grace, without a doubt; it is a declaration of trust in the Lord Yeshua’s sacrifice for the atonement of sins. But our faith is also action that seeks the Lord’s Way of doing things because of our belief. We believe unto righteousness. The Greek word *eis* (εἰς), translated as “unto” in Romans 10, means ‘motion into which one reaches or penetrates into a particular purpose or achieves union with a particular result.’ Our belief is what causes us to move toward the righteousness that Yeshua calls us into. Next we read, “confession is made unto salvation.” Our confession is made so that we might be led by His Holy Spirit through His sanctification process into salvation. This confession of faith is something we consciously verbalize for the benefit of all who can hear us in the heavens and the earth, but also something that we continually pursue through our faithful action. Through trials and tribulations, through convictions and repentances, we are sanctified for the day of salvation when the Lord returns. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul wrote, “the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” We who accept Messiah Yeshua as the propitiation for our sin are “being saved” by our faith, because it is this belief that drives us to then throw off our sin and take on the righteousness that our Lord showed us by His example. We are driven into motion toward the purpose of salvation, which comes when we endure until the End.

To help clarify these concepts, let's read from James 2. There, the apostle wrote, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” After giving an example of Abraham exhibiting His salvational faith through action, James concludes: “You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (James 2:19-20, 24). We will end up on the bright side of Judgement Day by this testimony of two: faith in Yeshua and obedience to God’s commands. Belief on its own

is nothing if it does not have action that confirms that belief. Action is absolutely nothing without Yeshua, for we are saved alone by grace through the actions of our King.

Because God loves us, He died for our sins on the cross, and when we choose to believe in Him and love Him for what He has done, we begin our journey toward His Heavenly Kingdom. For those of us on that journey, our choice to believe was a point of salvation, but from there we must endure in this salvation, for we are “being saved.” From where we are today, we must ask the Lord to help us devote our hearts to follow Him and keep His commandments. He will help us do this by convicting us with His Holy Spirit and leading us into repentance when we fail (John 3:14-18; 14:15-18). Our repentant hearts should become a common thing in our faith. Paul wrote, “I die daily.”

Our reading in Micah 7 provides a prophetic look ahead to the age of grace by way of using Jacob and Abraham as a testimony of two, and through Abraham in particular God said all the nations of the world would be blessed. We read in verses 18-20: “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities.” It continues as a direct prayer to God, “You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old.”

Hidden within this text is End Times prophesy, for Jacob, who stands for physical Israel, has received the Truth of Torah but rejected the mercy of Messiah Yeshua, and Abraham, who stands for all of the nations, including believing Israel, has received the grace through Yeshua, but many in the church today reject the Truth of God’s Word: that we must repent and keep the commandments of God. In this foolishness of humanity, God delights in mercy, we read, and He delights in showing His compassion toward us. When we look at this same passage in light of the spiritual reality of the New Covenant, both Jacob and Abraham become one people. The Truth manifests as both the written Scripture given to Moses and the prophets through the Voice of God as well as the living example of Yeshua, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. God’s mercy given to Abraham is extended to all of His spiritual children, who do the works of Abraham and exhibit their faith by those works. Just like Peter said in the passage I quoted earlier, the Lord is not slack in bringing about the End, but on account of His mercy and compassion, He is long-suffering; He wills that all men and women come to repentance; He’s waiting for the last possible moment so that

everyone He has called for His kingdom has an opportunity to accept Him or reject Him. But few will be chosen. He won't force us to go with Him into His kingdom, because he doesn't want robots to worship Him. By reading His Word, we can see that God certainly has done everything in His power to call us to His Heavenly gate, but the rest is up to us; it is a matter of our free will, just as it was in the beginning.

I don't know if you've ever thought much about this, but I'm sure you've observed, particularly in the Northeast, that seasons go from summer to fall to winter to spring and back to summer again; that a day goes from evening to morning and back to evening and then morning again; that animals and humans breathe in oxygen, and exhale carbon dioxide, while plants breathe in carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen; that water rains down to refresh the earth, accumulates into streams, then rivers, that feed into lakes, seas and oceans and eventually evaporates back into the sky to rain down to refresh the earth again; and there are many additional cycles like this that can be observed in nature, perhaps too numerous to list. Well, God's creation itself is a cycle, also, and like the other cycles of nature, God's elect will end up right back at the beginning again. Consider what Paul writes in Romans 1; that from "the creation of the world [God's] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead,..." When God created the Earth, He put the first of our ancestors in a perfect garden where he could eat from the Tree of Life and live forever, and there Adam and Eve could have a direct face-to-face relationship with God. It was for companionship that God created Adam to begin with, and additional companionship that He created Eve, so that Adam would not be alone, because God is so much more awesome than Adam. But God, being completely holy and good, did not desire a companion who would be compelled to love Him, but rather He desired a man and woman who would choose to get to know Him better each and every day into eternity. We know that "God is love," and love does not seek its own. I've said this before, and I'll say it again: What joy would anyone have from a robot he programmed to love him? If I, a creature made in the image of God, could not fathom enduring such a sycophant for more than a day, how much more would the eternal Creator of Heaven and Earth and everything in them grow bored by a creature programmed to adore Him? Thus, God planted the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden, but commanded man not to eat from it, lest he die. This tree represents our free will. God gave men and women the free will to decide if we would love Him, or not, and Adam decided that he loved his own way more than God's way, eternally separating Himself from our Holy God. We, being his offspring, were separated from God by the actions of our forefather, for Adam was expelled from the perfect garden where he walked with God and sentenced to die in the wilderness, and thus so too

would all of his offspring be born into this condition. But love is not puffed up, and God did not puff Himself up on account of Adam's sin. Rather, on account of love for humankind, He designed from the very beginning a way for his now fallen creation and their children to be reunited with Him, if they desired this reunion. In fact, He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and [He came] in the likeness of [man.] And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" so that upon His resurrection from the dead He could make a way back to the garden for those who choose to follow Him (Philippians 2:5-11). Our Holy God who was without sin took upon Himself all of our sin and sacrificed Himself so that we could be accounted righteous through faith in Him and restored to our original state. But more than this, He even made Himself relatable to us, a request Israel had asked of Him in the wilderness, so that when we come to have faith in our Lord Yeshua we can get to know God as a friend, as an encourager, and by His Spirit, an advocate, who is cheering us on and calling us back to Him each and every day.

All God asks is that we choose to love Him by accepting His sacrifice and then live according to His ways, showing ourselves repentant of the original sin of Adam as well as all of our individual sins that separate us from His holiness. In Deuteronomy 11:1, the Lord said, "Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always." In John 14:15, Yeshua said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." The Apostle John echoed this sentiment in 1 John 5:3, where he wrote: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." The Lord will not force His creation to love Him; He won't even force the people He set apart for Himself to do so. He simply states that the manner in which we show our love to Him, our creator and our deliverer, is when we keep His commandments, which He designed for our good. He has given us Torah as a love letter, but also an instruction manual on how we could live a blessed life, a life the way He designed it for our good, but He also fully understood that we would not keep it without error. On account of this, He sent prophets to call a remnant back to Himself to love Him, and even then He knew that His remnant would go astray. And on account of this, He came Himself in the flesh to live as one of us and show us how to keep His commandments, for those who choose to follow Him in this way can become His people. But He did more than this. He came to experience the life of His creation, to see how difficult it would be to live as one of us, and He succeeded where we failed. His perfect holiness, even in the flesh, enabled His self sacrifice on our behalf. He knew from the beginning He would have to do this,

and He also knew that only some of us would accept His offer to know Him intimately, the way He has always desired, through a relationship with His Son.

I don't intend to get into the specifics of God's long calling on the people of this world to break out of their rebellion and return to Him, but if you have any Biblical knowledge at all, you know the Lord called Abraham out of Ur, He called Isaac, He called Jacob, He called Joseph and then He called Moses, and between Moses and the advent of Messiah Yeshua, there was a remnant of righteous men whom He called, but now that He has come to redeem humanity Himself, He calls all flesh, all human beings, to return to Him, if they so choose, and that is where we're at today. How many of us will choose Him each and every day in our walk of endurance toward His Kingdom?

When we look at the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32 as an example of God's effort to call out a people to Himself, we can see His frustration that His people whom He made in His image would so thoroughly reject Him, even after He blessed them with abundance that they did not deserve. Moses, a servant of the Lord whom the Lord provided with great signs and wonders, proclaimed the Lord's name; Yahweh, and he "ascribe[d] greatness to our God," saying, "He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He." Despite Moses's understanding of God's perfect and holy nature and His personal love of the Lord, he himself rejected the Lord and took glory for himself at the opportune time, and so the Lord rejected Moses in this world on account of his rebellion. The Lord had to set this up as an example, for we cannot give lip service to the Lord and then fail to show Him the love that He desires by following through on our words with our deeds. We read the Lord proclaim to Moses, perhaps even with a heavy heart, "Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people; because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet you shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel." (Deuteronomy 32:48-51) When God commanded Moses to draw water out of the Rock, living water if you will to keep the people of Israel alive in a parched land, Moses claimed credit for the miracle rather than give glory to God. We must always give God the glory, for He is the beginning and the end of all things. Will Moses be offered grace through His ultimate faith in Yeshua? Moses may have stumbled, but He was later quite repentant and certainly



obeyed the Lord following his day of rebellion. Only God knows Moses's eternal disposition, but there is good reason to expect that He will be resurrected unto life. After all, He appeared with Elijah and Yeshua during the Transfiguration of our Lord into His glorified state. I think this is a good clue that Moses's punishment of death was temporary, until the Last Day, in the same way that each of us will die for our sins but will be resurrected on the Last Day to eternal life if we choose in our hearts to follow after the Lord.

It's notable that the Lord, by His grace, allowed Israel to enter the Promised Land with Joshua leading the way, even though He knew the great majority of the nation and their children would ultimately reject Him. Here's one prophesy concerning Jeshurun, which is one of the names representing Israel, from Deuteronomy 32:15-18: "Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; you grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese! Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear. Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you." The reality is that blessings from the Lord usually lead people to forget Him, and this historical allegory of Joshua leading Israel into the Promised Land is akin to the offer of salvation that we have through Yeshua today. Just like Moses had taken the glory for Himself when God brought water out of a rock to feed the nation of Israel, Israel would grow rich in God's blessings and claim the glory for themselves. This word picture represents the human condition in its saddest state, and it is a place we individually find ourselves in from time to time. Let it not be so, and if it is so, let us repent.

Whenever humanity exalts itself, whenever we as individuals exalt ourselves, the Lord has promised to humble us. While the Lord will not force us to love Him, He will not allow us to forget Him, for it is He who blesses us; it is He who brings the rains down on the righteous and the wicked, and as Moses explained, the Lord is the rock on which we can rely, He is the foundation of everlasting life. What follows the problem outlined in the previous passage is the Lord's promised judgment that He will always bring on a rebellious people. Consider Deuteronomy 32:19-27: "And when the Lord saw it, He spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters. And He said: 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith. They have provoked Me to jealousy by what is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation; I will move them to anger

by a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell; It shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. 'I will heap disasters on them; I will spend My arrows on them. They shall be wasted with hunger, devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction; I will also send against them the teeth of beasts, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword shall destroy outside; there shall be terror within for the young man and virgin, the nursing child with the man of gray hairs. I would have said, 'I will dash them in pieces, I will make the memory of them to cease from among men,' Had I not feared the wrath of the enemy, Lest their adversaries should misunderstand, lest they should say, 'Our hand is high; and it is not the Lord who has done all this.'"

And so, like we've discussed in Ezekiel 14 so many times before, the Lord will bring His judgments of famine, pestilence the sword and the wild beasts of the earth upon a rebellious people, but He will not allow this judgment to last forever, lest the surrounding nations exalt themselves on account of this judgment. The purpose of any of God's judgment is not destruction of all people, but rather repentance for the people of God who dwell among the rebellious. Since the fall of man, the Lord has been searching the hearts of men for a remnant of people who will truly love Him and seek Him with all of their hearts, for the Lord desires a people set apart for Himself. We can see this in two verses toward the end of Moses's song. In verse 36, we read, "For the Lord will judge His people And have compassion on His servants, When He sees that their power is gone, And there is no one remaining, bond or free." The Lord does not hope to crush us, but refine us into a people who understands Him, a people who are willing to Love Him because we know His majesty and we develop a great desire to serve Him. Many people of the world will not appreciate the Lord's maneuvers, and will continue to rebel against Him, and we will see this rebellion develop even among the people the Lord He called for Himself out of Egypt. When life gets difficult, some people turn away from God rather than toward Him, but this is the opposite of what we should do. Many people, from within and outside of Israel will rebel against His servants who endure in their faith, and even bring violence against them, but the Lord will have the last word and those who endure even in this will be saved. The Lord will ultimately call a people for Himself from within Israel as well as the rest of the nations, as we see in verse 43: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people." At the time of the End, God's remnant will be comprised from all the nations of the Earth, and the people who choose to love Him will be restored to the Garden that the Lord prepared at the beginning.

King David is certainly one of the men who has chosen to love the Lord with all of his heart, and in a song that echos the Song of Moses in many ways, the humble king shows us what kind of heart the Lord desires from His servants. In 2 Samuel 22:(3-4, 31-33, 47-50), David writes, among so much more: “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, My stronghold and my refuge; My Savior, You save me from violence. I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies. ... As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. For who is God, except the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God? God is my strength and power, And He makes my way perfect. ... The Lord lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let God be exalted, The Rock of my salvation! It is God who avenges me, and subdues the peoples under me; He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man. Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name.”

If we truly want to be exalted and enter the Kingdom of God, then we must humble ourselves like King David before the Lord our God. We can see that David developed a complete trust in God, a faith like we spoke about earlier that takes action, a faith that bears fruit. David didn't just trust the Lord to deal with his day-to-day battles, but He also lived by the Way of the Lord, and described it as “perfect.” The Word of the Lord is “proven,” He says, meaning that He has no doubt in it. With the exception of one grievous error that David repented for, the king offered up every decision to the Lord in prayer, and He consulted the Word of God by the Holy Spirit that anointed him on account of his faith. The Lord always answered David's prayers.

In a message about repentance, you'd think I'd want to revisit the story of David's sin against Bathsheba and his murderous betrayal against her husband, Uriah the Hittite. I do, briefly, but only to point out that Psalm 51, David's song of repentance, showcases what true repentance looks like. Whenever we sin and recognize it, no matter what sin it is, we must first confess this sin to the Lord and then ask Him to “create in [us] a clean heart,” to “renew a right spirit within [us],” and to “take not His Holy Spirit from [us]” but rather to “restore in [us] the joy of [our] salvation” and “give [us] wisdom” that can only come from God. It is on account of true repentance like this, which restores us to obedience to the Lord's commandments, because we love Him, that the Lord will be able to use us to serve Him and fulfill His purposes for us in this life, with the promise of abundance and fellowship with Him in the life to come.

Before we close, I want to point out one concept that both Moses and David brought up about our God, for this is a concept that ought to bring life to those who truly follow Him. In Matthew 7:24-27, Yeshua plays off of the image of God as a rock of salvation, which both Moses and David explained. Our Lord, who came in the flesh, simply desires our love, and, as Yeshua has explained, to love God is to keep His commandments. Through His long-suffering and sacrifice, the Lord has surely shown He loves us. Even through His judgments, the Lord professes His love, for we know that true love rejoices in the Truth, but does not rejoice in iniquity. God's judgments are a type of chastening designed to restore His relationship with the remnant of His people, for their good, so they might prosper and have abundant life in His Kingdom. When chastening leads to repentance, the Lord moves toward restoration and ultimately glorification. In order to cultivate this right relationship, we must build our life upon Yeshua, who is the rock of our salvation. We must rely on His grace that saves before we can take any action, for no action that we take can save us. However, if we don't see action develop on account of our faith, then perhaps our faith is lacking, and that brings us back to the beginning. Yeshua explained this in His parable as follows: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

These sayings of the Lord, recorded in the New Testament as the Word of Yeshua, and recorded in the Old Testament as the Law and the Prophets, are life to us, and when we practice the Word of God in our lives and apply it to our every thought, word and action, we build our life on a strong foundation that will withstand any suffering or hardship or tribulation that might come our way, even at the End of Days. When we love Him, we will keep His commandments, and He will send His Holy Spirit to help us. When we fall away from this love, we will be judged, and if we persist in this disobedience, our fall will be great—in other words, it will be eternal. And so if there is any backsliding way that we're experiencing on the sand, this is a call for us to step back up onto the Rock, which is Yeshua, so that we may trust in Him and walk in all of His ways. This is the only way we will endure until the end when He comes.

Yeshua's parable at the end of Matthew 7 simply explains the same cycle that we spoke about earlier, for in humbling ourselves and seeking repentance for any shortcoming that we might present before the Lord, the Lord will highly exalt us. Any

life that we build with faith and trust in Yeshua is built on solid ground, and it will not fail. However, if we turn away from Him, we lose the strong foundation needed to live in His Kingdom. Judgment will likely follow, which is intended to bring us to repentance. If it doesn't, then the only outcome we can expect is destruction. The Lord will not abide forever with the rebellious. He desires a people who love Him, and if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. And so, if we find ourselves fallen away, in judgment or languishing in our relationship with the Lord, our duty is to repent, if we desire to be with God. And I am certain that we all ought to be humbling ourselves in this way as we approach His throne each week for Shabbat, and certainly as we approach His Judgment seat on Yom Kippur. If we desire for Him to welcome us into His Kingdom, then we must repent of our sin and turn to Him as our Redeemer. In 1 John 1:8-9, the apostle says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is the heart we ought to have at all times, brothers and sisters, for our Lord has said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" and Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," and "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:3, 5, 6).

And in Matthew 23:12, the Lord said, "And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." This has eternal ramifications, brothers and sisters. Let us prepare our hearts to be humble, contrite and hungry for the righteousness of Christ, in this season especially, but truly each and every day of our lives, so that we can be used by the Lord for His purposes. Shabbat shalom.