

Shalom and welcome to His-Israel's FB LIVE ... this is Keren Hannah in Jerusalem. We will be exploring the 6th Hebrew month of ELUL... and this year it appears to have extra significance! The Hebrew word for month - *chodesh* - shares the same root as the word *chadash*, meaning **new**. No Eluls are ever the same, and this one may prove to be extraordinary.

The new Hebrew month of Elul begins tomorrow, AUGUST 21, 2017 , in the evening - approx 7:15 pm here in Israel and the Solar Eclipse begins in the USA at the same time. Coincidence? I think not. In His Word, God tells us right in the beginning, in the book of Genesis 1:14, that He is in full control of the sun, moon and stars and that the *astronomical* constellations would be used as signs of things to come. We know too that the enemy of our souls has perverted these into *astrological* signs to, so-called, "predict the future."

God's Word in Genesis is confirmed in Luke 21:25,

"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world."

We are even told of solar eclipses in Amos 8:9 "I will darken the earth in the clear day..."

The arrangement of the constellations and the alignment of the planets are perfectly described in the book of Revelation 12:1-2 and this particular alignment will only happen this once in history. According to many scientific resources, that you can Google and explore, this year's solar eclipse is unique in many ways, one being that it will be the most viewed in history. EVERYONE in the USA, including Alaska and Hawaii, will be able to view at least a partial eclipse. The longest known total solar eclipse lasted about 7 minutes. This eclipse will last 1 hour and 33 min.

The first big city to view the eclipse will be Salem, Oregon - Salem is named after JeruSALEM... and as the sun darkens there the sun will be setting at the same time here in Jerusalem. Sadly, Salem USA is also known as a center of witchcraft and the occult - the counter city of the holy Jerusalem of God? In fact the eclipse path travels over 7 different Salems across the US! The eclipse path is exactly 70 miles wide. 70 has a sacred meaning in that it is specially connected with Jerusalem and in that 7 that represents completion and perfection and 10 represents fullness of completion and God's law - the 10 Words or commandments. 70 also symbolizes a period of judgment.

How all this ties in with our focus today - is that Elul, traditionally, is a time of preparation - of preparing our hearts for the Fall Feasts and High Holy Days to come - including the fact that the eclipse is also exactly 40 days from Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is the holiest day on the Hebrew calendar and, as you probably know, means "Day of Atonement" and the whole season, the 40 days, from 1st Elul until Yom Kippur, is a time of repentance.

The question is, with this unique eclipse: "Is the US being warned to repent?"

What I just recently learned, in connection with the fact that the book of Jonah is the one read every Yom Kippur, is that after a period of plagues and earthquakes, a great eclipse overtook the city of Nineveh, they were given 40 days to repent before the prophet Jonah arrived. Nineveh is the modern city of Mosul, in N Iraq, on the West bank of the Tigris River. It was the center of ISIS attacks and taken over by them in 2003; after 3 years under their control the city was liberated on 1 July, 2007. Unfortunately the tomb of Jonah was destroyed by ISIS.

Yeshua said, in Luke 11:29,

"This generation is an evil generation. [No kidding]. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah." Remember, it was the king - the one in a position of authority, that repented first. [As a matter of interest the President of the USA, Donald Trump, was born on an eclipse. We need to continue to pray and intercede for him!]

Other interesting facts that Mark Blitz points out: according to NASA, is that the sun is 400 kilometers further from the earth than the moon, and the sun's diameter is 400 times greater than the moon, which is why when the two converge, the moon can block out the sun! What precision! Also, the numerical value of 400 correlates with the letter *tav* in the letters of the Hebrew alphabet - the last letter, which means "sign."

We don't have time to go into this aspect more at the moment but you can Google Pastor Mark Blitz's and other posts if you are interested.

This all sounds very heavy and threatening - repentance, plagues, earthquakes, judgment! - but the interesting thing is that Elul, for the children of God, is a month of compassion, mercy and forgiveness. It's a time to draw close to our Father and King, and to feel the difference, because, spiritually, we are able to reach higher and draw closer than we ever did before! In a tangible way - right now and through whatever is to come - we have an opportunity to open our hearts, to hear His voice and to experience His love and faithfulness in a new and deeper way.

The New Moon that marks the start of the sixth Hebrew month of Elul, appears 30 days before Rosh HaShannah (the new Hebrew civil calendar year), which falls on the first day of the seventh month of Tishrei. With the arrival of Elul we begin to hear the sound of the shofar all over Israel. The call of the shofar is a call to wake up and to repent, and to rededicate our lives to God. The shofar is blown in synagogues as part of the daily morning and evening prayers, apart from on Shabbat.

It is a reminder that this is a particular, set-apart month to do *cheshbon nefesh* (an accounting, as it were, of the soul) before we arrive at Rosh HaShannah and the Ten Days of Awe that lead up to the final Day of Judgment - Yom Kippur.

The forty day period between the first of Elul and Yom Kippur is, in other words, a time to deeply consider our lives and see if there are any areas where we have lapsed and fallen short in our service to our Father in Heaven and maybe have strayed from walking in His ways.

Rosh HaShannah, on the first day of the month of Tishrei, is considered the first day of judgment, when God is proclaimed the King of Creation. The following ten days are seen as a grace period that culminate with Yom Kippur, the great Day of Judgment. We have opportunity to make a final examination of our lives. The shofar is silent during these days, and we can attempt to fully quieten our souls in order to hear the "still, small voice of God." We are reminded that as well as repenting of any shortcomings and taking action to resolve any interpersonal conflicts, we are to watch our tongues in how we speak and our ears in how we listen.

On the eve of Yom Kippur, God-fearing Jews and many Christian believers too, begin the fast day. We abstain from regular physical actions such as eating, drinking, washing and bathing, special dress - most wear plain white clothes and no leather shoes. It is a day of meditation and prayer. Prayers in the synagogue are mostly confessional and are held all day. We deeply reflect on both Who He is and on who we are. As the day draws to a close, the final prayer ends with a blast of the shofar that increases in volume and intensity. This blast signals that the fast is over, the books of Judgment are closed. It also is a joyous reminder that the day is coming for the arrival of Messiah as King of kings to establish God's rule over all the earth from Jerusalem, His holy city.

An important factor during this special time of awareness and repentance is the understanding that the repentance, or *teshuvah* in Hebrew, that is most pleasing to our Father God is that which comes from a heart of love and not from fear of punishment. It should not be a time of morbid introspection! The very name of the month reminds us of this! ELUL - אלול - is an acronym in Hebrew for the beautiful verse in Song of Songs 6:3, *Ani le'dodi ve'dodi li*. I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine. Or, another way to translate it - I am *for* my beloved and my beloved is *for* me! The Aramaic name of the month - Elul - means 'searching'. We are searching our hearts but we also are searching to draw close to our Father God - seeking to serve Him out of love, out of the desire to do His will because we love Him and long to please Him.

The whole Fall Feast season, therefore, should be a time of joy and intimacy with the Beloved of our souls. There is a beautiful *midrash* - or analogy that describes how this is a time when the King is in the field. What does that mean? It ties in with the promise in Psalm 145:18, "God is close to all who call to Him, to all who call to Him with sincerity."

We can imagine God as King dwelling in Heaven - His royal palace where He is seated on His great throne. By His grace, we have our Messiah Yeshua seated at His right hand and, as High Priest he is constantly making intercession for us before the Throne of Grace, and we can draw near in Him. However, we are here on earth - working in the fields of the world, as it were, for our King. During one special time in the year, however, the King quietly slips away from the palace and walks in the fields meeting in a close and personal way with those who are seeking Him and recognize Him. This is the time...the 30 days of Elul and the Ten Days of Awe leading up to Yom Kippur.

It is a special time to turn our hearts to Him in love. We find another very pertinent passage in Isaiah 55:6-7, where he says:

"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, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

The Hebrew word for repentance, *teshuvah*, literally means turn and return. Compare the merciful father in Yeshua's parable of the prodigal son. Repentance is a loving gift from our merciful Father who abundantly pardons! We human beings are limited by the laws of time and nature. The Creator, of course, is not. And in offering us this gift of repentance He actually supernaturally counteracts time. He can undo and forgive and heal sins of the past as if they had not happened. As Jewish author Avraham Finkel describes in his book, *The Essence of the Holy Days*, "Time [with God] is reversible; the past can be undone; a wasted life can be restored."

To finish - **Psalm 27** is read every day during Elul. Orthodox Jews read it morning and evening and all the way through until the end of Sukkot. It is a very worthwhile exercise to write it out yourself - also in Hebrew if you can - and at least during Elul to read it daily and even try to memorize it. The psalm reminds us that the Lord is our Light and our Salvation. He is our strength. Whom shall we fear?! When we turn to Him and keep our hand in His, His light dispels any darkness in our lives and the light of His Truth guides our feet into and throughout the year ahead.

We may not know the details of what is in store for each of us and our nation and our world, but “the main thing is not to fear but to have trust and faith in the faithfulness and loving-kindness of our Almighty Creator who has our lives in His hands.

We can only keep looking up, keep our lamps of faith lit, not fear the evil but trust in our Creator! And sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, in Rev. 15:3-4,

“Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!
Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come and worship you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Amen and Amen!

Please take a look at the His-Israel website for a meaningful compilation of meditations for the month of Elul! A link will be here on the FB Page.

Also, please join me again for an Overview of the the month of *Tishrei* and the very significant Fall Feasts on Sunday 3rd September - same time same place.

Blessings to you from Jerusalem, the City of the Great and soon Coming King.