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**Feast of
Dedication:
Deny
Yourself
and
Follow
Him • /
David
Wilber /
Founded
in Truth
Fellowship**

Main Verses:

- [Romans 15:27](#)
- [Galatians 3:9](#)
- [John 4:22](#)
- [Romans 11](#)
- [Romans 9](#)
- [Mark 8:34](#)
- [Matthew 5:17](#)
- [John 10:22](#)
- [Mark 1:15](#)

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Message Given: Dec 10th, 2023

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Good to be with you all. I hope you all are having an amazing Hanukkah this year. Most of you know me, but for those of you who don't, my name is David Wilber, and I'm just so excited and honored for this opportunity to share from God's Word. So before we get started, will you guys please join me in prayer? Heavenly Father, we just come before you and we thank you for what you've done in our lives, what you've done throughout history. to bring us to where we are today, how you are always faithful to your people. And Lord, I ask that this message that you have given me to share today, Father, that you would give me the courage to speak the word that you've given me to speak. Lord, that you would, if there's anything from me, Lord, that's not from you, I ask, Lord, that it would fall on deaf ears. But Lord, that every word from you that you've given me to speak, that it would impact your people, that people would

be transformed and changed today. and edified in your son Yeshua's name. Amen. All right. Well, as you all know, we are in the middle of Hanukkah, which is one of my favorite times of the year. This is a very important holiday. Now, many people refer to Hanukkah as a minor holiday. Obviously, it's not prescribed in the Torah. The events that Hanukkah commemorates happened much later than when the Torah was given. Nevertheless, I don't like calling Hanukkah Hanukkah a minor holiday because that seems to convey that it's not that important. Obviously, that's not the intent, right? You know, just like we call the minor prophets the minor prophets. That does not mean to convey that they're less important. But it's still a pet peeve of mine because, like I said, this is an extremely important holiday. And I think psychologically we tend to downplay it when we think of it as merely a minor holiday. I posted a graphic on Facebook earlier a couple days ago and just wishing everybody a happy Hanukkah. And this goofball was commenting and saying, well, Hanukkah is not commanded in the Torah. You're adding to the Torah. I'm like, well, there's nothing in the Torah about posting comments on Facebook either. And yet here you are. But you know, people have this idea that because Hanukkah's not commanded in the Torah, it's not important. And yes, it's not a commanded festival. But I don't think that John thought of Hanukkah as unimportant. In his gospel, he portrays this festival as ultimately pointing to Yeshua, just like he does with Passover, Sukkot, and so forth. As Yeshua, throughout his ministry, he fulfills these various festivals in John's gospel. And Hanukkah is included in that. So John treated Hanukkah on the same level as these other festivals in some sense. It points to Yeshua. Why am I belaboring this point? Well, because I believe the message of Hanukkah is something that we as believers need to hear today. The message of Hanukkah is incredibly relevant to our lives today. And so that's what I want to talk about. But before we get there, just to give kind of a quick summary of where Hanukkah came from. Many of you are already familiar with the story, but it's always good to kind of revisit the reasons why we do what we do. So Hanukkah is a Hebrew word that means dedication, right? And that is because the holiday, Hanukkah, it commemorates the rededication of the temple in Jerusalem during the time of the Maccabees. So rededication is a major theme of the holiday. It's also called the Festival of Lights. And light is another major theme, as we'll discuss later. But what led to the rededication of the temple? Well, in 167 BC, the Syrian king Antiochus IV, one of the successors of Alexander the Great, he became ruler over all Judea. And eventually, during his reign, he started oppressing the Jewish people. Basically, what he wanted to do was to Hellenize them. What does that mean? It basically means to convert them into good Greek citizens. You see, Antiochus did not like that the Jews were different. He did not like that they had their own unique culture and customs and values and beliefs. He saw their way of life, their values, their beliefs as a threat to the unity of his empire. And so therefore, to stop the Jews from being different, He enacted laws prohibiting them from doing the things that made them different. He outlawed things like Torah study. He outlawed Sabbath observance and circumcision and observance of the festivals and so forth, all of the things that made the Jews different. And so basically, the Syrian Greeks wanted to erase Jews and Judaism, and they went further than just enacting laws. 2 Maccabees tells us that the Syrian Greeks desecrated the temple. They had orgies and drinking parties within the temple. They arrested and executed Jewish women for circumcising their sons in accordance with God's commandment. And also, when they caught a group of Jews observing the Sabbath, 2 Maccabees tells us that they burned them alive. So this was a very difficult time for God's people, and the Jews at this time were basically presented with two options. Stop being Jewish or die. Unfortunately, many Jews did choose to abandon their faith in the God of Israel and fully conform to Greek culture.

However, there were a faithful few who said, no, we don't like your options that you've given us. We are not going to compromise. We are going to resist our oppressors. And the tensions between this remnant, this faithful remnant, and the oppressive government at the time eventually exploded into a full-blown revolt. A priestly family led by Metathias and his son Judah Maccabee, they formed a small army to fight against the Syrian Greeks. And this fighting went on for about three years until this tiny Jewish army miraculously prevailed and regained Jerusalem and the temple. And after they won the war, they rededicated the temple to the God of Israel, and this dedication ceremony lasted eight days, hence the eight days of Hanukkah. So that's where it comes from. 1 Maccabees 4, starting in verse 56. It says, And so that's pretty much the story of Hanukkah. That is the story that we remember and celebrate every year. We remember this story of a people dedicated to God despite extreme opposition and even the threat of death. They said, no, we're not going to compromise. No, you cannot erase the God of Israel. You cannot erase Jews. You cannot erase Judaism. And so Hanukkah This story, it fits the biblical pattern of the Jewish people being oppressed and God miraculously delivering them like he always does. And we celebrate that. And it's good that we celebrate that. This is a very good holiday. And as I said in the beginning, this message of Hanukkah is something we as believers need to hear today. Why do I say that? Why is this message so important today? Well, there are three reasons that I want to talk about. First, Hanukkah is a reminder of God's commitment to the Jewish people. Hanukkah is a reminder of God's commitment to the Jewish people. Now, you might say, if you're not a Jewish Christian, you might say, but I'm a Gentile Christian. How is God's commitment to the Jewish people relevant to me? Well, for one, there wouldn't even be Christianity without Judaism. And so it's very relevant to us that God is committed to the Jewish people. Had Antiochus been successful in eradicating Judaism, there would be no Jewish people for the Jewish Messiah to be born into. We wouldn't have the scriptures. We wouldn't have the prophets, the apostles, nothing. The New Testament is written by Jews forever. In Romans 15, Paul implies that Gentile believers actually have an obligation toward the Jews. He's talking about delivering aid to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, and during his missionary journeys, he's gathering aid from these largely Gentile congregations. in order to deliver that aid to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. And in verse 27, he speaks about how these churches actually owe support to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. This is what he says in Romans 15, 27. He said, they, the Gentile congregations, they were pleased to do it, to provide this aid, and indeed, they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings. Dr. Craig Keener, he's a New Testament scholar, he writes, quote, Paul speaks of Gentiles' spiritual debt to those in whose spiritual blessings they now share. So according to Paul, Gentile Christians owe a debt, in a sense, to the Jewish people. Because they share in their blessings. Now the question for you is this. Have you come to share in the Jews' spiritual blessings? You have a copy of the Torah, don't you? You have the prophets, the New Testament. You believe in the Jewish Messiah. Paul says if you have faith in the Jewish Messiah, the answer is yes, you have come to share in these blessings. Galatians 3.9, he says, So through Messiah, we are adopted into the family of Abraham and share in the blessings given to Israel. So as Christians... We have a certain obligation toward the Jewish people because we share in their spiritual blessings. And this message could not be more relevant than it is today in light of the rise of anti-Semitism. Two months ago, we saw the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Two months ago, terrorists invaded Israel and murdered 1,400 innocent people. they mass-raped Jewish women. They slaughtered Jewish babies and burned them alive in cooking ovens for fun. And

they proudly filmed many of these atrocities and posted them on social media as digital trophies, laughing as they did it. Today, you literally have a terrorist regime on Israel's border who is dedicated to the eradication of the Jewish people. It's in their charter. But what really scares me is you have countless people in the West marching in support of this terrorist regime, spewing anti-Semitic slurs and chanting genocidal slogans like "From the River to the Sea," which is a genocidal slogan calling for the eradication of the Jewish people. Sadly, there are a lot of people today, yet again, who are attempting to erase Jews and Judaism. According to the ADL, since October 7th, anti-Semitic incidents are up 400%, and that is only in the United States. Jews are being assaulted, harassed, and in some cases even murdered.

Just last month in France, a man went to a random young Jewish woman's house and stabbed her and then drew a swastika on her front door as a message to all Jews. that we're coming for you. That was his message. This is not just some territorial conflict in the Middle East. You have a movement who hates Jews and wishes to rid the world of them. And we've seen this before over and over and over again throughout history. It's that same movement. It's that same sickness of anti-Semitism. We've seen it during The time of the ancient Persian Empire, with Haman's plan to eradicate the Jews from the land, as we read about in the book of Esther. We've seen it with Antiochus in the Syrian Greeks, as we read about in the books of Maccabees. And anti-Semitism lives on in modern times. It has been embedded in the radical ideologies of communism, Nazism, and Islamism. anti-Semitism is deeply ingrained in culture after culture and passed on from generation to generation. The anti-Semitism we see today in the West, on college campuses among the progressive left, it's just the latest manifestation of this very old hatred. A few days ago, the presidents of Harvard, MIT, and Penn University, they were brought before Congress, and they were explicitly asked by a congresswoman whether calling for genocide of Jews is, quote, "...bullying and harassment." All of them refused to say that calling for the genocide of Jews was a case of bullying and harassment. You can watch the video yourself. It is astonishing. For five minutes, this congresswoman was begging them to answer the question with the right answer, giving them multiple chances. They all refused to to say that calling for genocide of Jews is bullying and harassment. That was the explicit question. They said it, quote, "depends upon the context," as if calling for genocide is somehow okay in certain contexts. They said it needs to, quote, "turn into action first" before they can say it is harassment. As in people need to actually commit genocide before their calls for genocide could be considered harassment? That's what they said. So yet again, we are faced with this evil. Those who claim they would have opposed the Nazis during the Holocaust, well, now you have an opportunity to prove it. Never again is now. Christians are called to stand with the oppressed, but sadly, too many of us want to just ignore what's going on. I remember reading about this man who was a young boy in Germany during the Holocaust and And he tells this story about attending a church not far from Auschwitz. And there were train tracks next to the church that would carry Jews to Auschwitz. And the train tracks, like I said, they were right next to the church and they would be coming during the church services. The trains would come by the church. And listen to what he writes here. He writes, quote, Years have passed and no one talks about it much anymore, but I still hear the sound of that train whistle in my sleep. I can still hear them crying out for help. God forgive me. God forgive all of us who called ourselves Christians yet did nothing. Likewise, today, too many Christians want to turn a blind eye to what's happening because it's uncomfortable and inconvenient. I was watching a video from some professing Christian, some content creator, or whatever. He was saying, anti-Semitism, it's just made up. Just made up by the elites. It's not really happening. It's a made-up outrage. Because admitting it It's too

uncomfortable. Worse, people even try to justify it. Oh, it's because, you know, I don't like what Israel is doing. So, you know, the Jews, they're just getting what they deserve. Anti-Semitism is contrary to the gospel. It's contrary to Messiah's kingdom. In John 4, Yeshua said that salvation is from the Jews. The Jewish people have a special plan in God's plan of salvation, a special place in God's plan of salvation. In Romans 11, Paul said that the Jews are loved by God, even though many of them rejected the gospel at the time. God loves the Jewish people. He loves them. They're loved by God. In Romans 9, Paul says that God's promises to the Jews are still theirs. Antisemitism is against the heart of the gospel and we have a responsibility to call it out. Stop supporting these universities, these politicians, and these so-called religious leaders who make excuses or even justify this evil. Stop supporting them. Unsubscribe from their YouTube channels. Stop putting stupid people in positions of power. Hanukkah is relevant today because it reminds us of the evils of anti-Semitism. It reminds us that we are called to sound the alarm and stand against this evil in our day. Hanukkah reminds us to pray and to weep for the Jewish people to receive their Messiah and for Messiah to restore the kingdom to Israel in accordance with God's promises. Our entire faith is based on the Jewish scriptures, the Jewish Messiah, and the Jewish apostles. And since we share in the spiritual blessings of the Jewish people, we have an obligation to support them. A second reason that Hanukkah is relevant to us today is that it reminds us to prioritize God's will over our own will. Following God often comes at great cost. Yeshua said, deny yourself, pick up your cross daily, and follow me. That is our calling as followers of Yeshua, is to deny ourselves, deny our comforts, deny what we want, deny our priorities, and follow him. Following Messiah often means giving up what matters to you. There's a story in 2 Maccabees 7-11. This is during the oppression of the Jews during the time of the Maccabees. And a woman and her seven sons were arrested and given the choice to either eat pork or be tortured and killed. And they all chose the second option. Each of them were brutally tortured and put to death for refusing to disobey God's command. Their limbs were chopped off, they were burned. And as each of them were being tortured, they would encourage each other to stay faithful to God. Listen to what some of these sons said as they were being tortured. In 2 Maccabees 7, verse 11, this is one of the sons speaking. He said, God gave these hands. He was about to have his hands chopped off. He said, God gave these hands to me, but his laws mean more to me than my hands. and I know God will give them back to me again. Another son said, I am glad to die at your hands because we have the assurance that God will raise us from the dead. The story goes on to say that the last brother was told that if he would only forsake God's law, he would be given riches and fame and authority, and he would even be called friend of the king. Just forsake God. You'll get all of this. He chose to remain faithful to God, which meant death. And by that choice, he became a friend of the true king of the universe. Talk about dedication. Talk about denying yourself to follow God. Today, we're ready to throw out God's commandments the second we face even the most minor of inconveniences. It's true. Not even persecution. Just the most minor of inconveniences. We're ready to throw out God's commands. Just to be vulnerable with you guys about my own struggles, I've been keeping Sabbath for almost two decades. And there are times, sometimes, when I have just come very close to saying, forget it. I want to do what I want to do. I have too much work to do. I'm too stressed out. I'm in full-time school. I work full-time. I just have too much stuff to do. I don't want, I just need a little bit time. I need a little bit more time. I don't want to dedicate this time to God and my family. It's pretty pathetic. God sent his son to die for me, to save me from sin and death. God gave me everything, and I can't even dedicate one day a week. Like, I struggle with wanting to dedicate that time to him. And resting isn't even hard. Resting is a gift. It's awesome. I'm

always glad when I do it, you know? I... And that's just an inconvenience sometimes in my mind. That's not even persecution. God forbid we have to face actual persecution someday. Our persecution comes in the form of people just criticizing us on Facebook. And even that is just too much for us to handle sometimes. You really believe this stuff in the Bible. You really believe that marriage is a sacred union between one man and one woman. You are such a hateful bigot. Well, I don't want people to say that about me. I don't want people not to like me. I don't want people to think I'm weird. I want to be accepted. You really believe that a woman doesn't have a right to murder the baby in her womb? You are such a misogynist.

Just like in the time of the Maccabees, the world demands that we stop taking God so seriously. The world demands that we stop taking the values and principles in his word so seriously. And if we're honest about it is tempting just to want to shut up and stop being so open about the gospel all the time and God's word all the time. We don't want people to think we're weird. We want to be accepted. We don't want to give up what we want to do. And yet that is what the Messiah commands us. He commands us to deny ourselves to follow him. Many of us are unwilling to do that because we don't really believe he is worthy enough to give up everything for. We don't really believe that. That's why many people still look at porn. You know, I mean, they can stop. They choose not to, because God's not really worth it. Why many people refuse to give up lots of things, because God's not really worth it to them.

And that's why Hanukkah is relevant, because it reminds us that he is worthy. The Jewish martyrs in 2 Maccabees 7, they understood that God is worth giving up everything for, and they lived and died in light of that truth. That is something that we need to reflect on in this season, to ask ourselves, are we truly dedicated to God or not? Is he really worth it to us or not? Or is this just a social club? Is this just something that we do to have something to do on Saturdays? Because if that's all it is, then what's the point? Just Hellenize. Just hot or cold. The third reason that Hanukkah is relevant today is because it's all about the Messiah. As we all know, Yeshua fulfills the feast days. He embodies the meanings of these feast days in his life and in his teachings. This is, of course, is Messianic Theology 101. This is why a lot of us have come into this movement is because, wow, we see how, you know, these biblical feast days, they're all about Yeshua. He died during Passover, rose during first fruits, sent the spirit on Shavuot, like all of these amazing events connected to the Messiah are You know, they're all embedded in the feast days. And as I mentioned at the beginning, John's gospel teaches that

Yeshua also, in addition to these other feasts, he fulfills Hanukkah. Yeshua embodies the message of Hanukkah in his life and teachings. John chapter 10, verse 22, says, at the time of the feast of dedication, that's Hanukkah, at the time of the feast of dedication, Hanukkah,

And so John mentions the Feast of Dedication for a reason. It's not just coincidence. He doesn't mention Yeshua's presence at the temple during Hanukkah for no reason. John connects Yeshua to Hanukkah because... He wants to convey a theological message. Just as God delivered Israel in the time of the Maccabees, Yeshua is our ultimate deliverer. Also, Hanukkah celebrates the consecration of the temple. Later on in this chapter, Yeshua goes on to say that he is consecrated. So Yeshua, he is connecting himself to the temple, to the festival. He is alluding to himself ultimately as the true temple, the ultimate temple of God, the reality to which the shadow points. Yeshua fulfills the purpose of the temple. What is the purpose of the temple? The purpose of the temple is to unite heaven and earth. It's to make a place for God's presence to dwell among his people on earth. Well, that's what Yeshua did. Yeshua fulfills another major theme of Hanukkah. Hanukkah is the festival of lights. John calls Yeshua the true light, which gives light to everyone. And so Hanukkah is relevant because Yeshua fulfills it. It is a time to remember and celebrate him as the ultimate deliverer of his

people. And as I said, his teachings also reflect the message of Hanukkah. In 1 Maccabees 3, starting in verse 42, it says, So they were fighting for, quote, That was the motivation. What was the motivation for these Jewish warriors? What were they fighting for? They were motivated by love for their people and the sanctuary. And the sanctuary, of course, is a symbol of God's presence among them. In other words, everything that the Maccabees did was motivated by love for God and love for their neighbor. That's literally the Jesus Creed, right? Yeshua said the greatest commandment was to love God and love your neighbor, right? The entire law hangs upon those two commandments. Our Torah observance needs to be motivated by love for God and love for neighbor. And so Yeshua's teachings, his creed, it embodies the spirit behind the Hanukkah story. Yeshua's teaching also embodies the Hanukkah message of being radically counter-cultural. the Hanukkah message to be radically counter-cultural, to say no to compromise. Like the Syrian Greeks, the culture wants nothing to do with God's law, the culture today. They would prefer that we all abandon God's law. They would prefer that we all stop making them feel so uncomfortable by being so weird, by talking about the gospel so much, by loving God's word so much. Just keep that away from me. Don't talk about that stuff. Yeshua says no. Yeshua, during his Sermon on the Mount, he said that he did not come to abolish the law, but fulfilled it, and he urged his followers to to do and teach even the least of the Torah's commandments. He said, you are to be radically counter-cultural in a world that hates God's law, in a world that wants nothing to do with it, in a world that wants you to compromise, you are to be radically counter-cultural. What's interesting is that the Greek word there for abolish in Matthew 5, 17, when he says, I did not come to abolish the law or the prophets, that Greek word kataluo is, is used in four Maccabees and Josephus' writings talking about the story of the Maccabees, the Hanukkah story. These Jewish writers, they connect abolishing the law with Antiochus. They write that Antiochus came literally to abolish kataluo, the law. And when Antiochus was trying to pressure a Jewish priest into eating pork, the Jewish priest objected and he said, no, no, no, I can't. abolish the law. I can't kataluo the law. And so Yeshua is the anti-Antiochus. He is the anti-Antiochus. He did not come to abolish the law like Antiochus came to do. He came to fulfill it, to establish it, to bring it forth in its true meaning, to establish it in the lives of his followers who would be doers and teachers of even the least of the Torah's commandments. The Maccabees, they also refused to compromise God's word despite the cultural pressures to do so. Yeshua, in his Sermon on the Mount, he calls us to stop caring about what the culture thinks. He says, the world is going to hate you. That's a promise. The world is going to hate you, but your reward is great in heaven. Just like the Jewish martyrs in 2 Maccabees 7, Yeshua admonishes his followers to focus on the kingdom and eternity. The culture dehumanizes people and reduces them to sexual objects, pornography, and just sexual deviancy. Yeshua calls us to sexual purity and to not use people as objects for our own gratification and lust. He says you gotta deal with that lust that's in your heart. That is radically counter-cultural. The culture says give into it. The culture diminishes the value of marriage. Yeshua teaches us that marriage is sacred and worth fighting for and keeping together. You know, you can't redefine it. You can't treat it like it's nothing. Another way that Yeshua's teachings fulfill the meaning of Hanukkah is by Yeshua's emphasis on repentance. After fighting many battles, the Maccabees found themselves in an impossible situation. The king commanded the complete destruction of the Jewish people and armies were camped all around them. And so the Jewish people at that moment, they prayed and they repented and petitioned God. It says in 1 Maccabees 3.47, in deep mourning, they fasted all that day, put on sackcloth, threw ashes on their heads and tore their clothes. And so the basis of the story of the Maccabees, it was

based on repentance. It was based on seeking God's mercy, seeking God's strength, repenting of their sins, repenting of their compromises and saying, God, we want to come back to you.

We want to rededicate to you. Help us in this moment. Yeshua's ministry was centered around repentance as well. At the very beginning of his public ministry, he walked along the Galilee and the Judea. And what did he declare? What was the first thing he declared in the gospel of Mark? He said, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Yeshua is calling you to a life of repentance. You may have compromised. You may have been living a life of compromise. This Hanukkah season, he is calling you to confess your sins, to turn toward God, and to rededicate yourself to God's will. He is calling you to stop living by your own standard and start submitting to his standard despite cultural pressure, despite what you want to do.

That starts with repentance. That starts with realizing that your situation without God is hopeless. You need God to intervene just like the Maccabees needed God to intervene. So Hanukkah is especially relevant today because it's all about Yeshua and Yeshua was all about holiness. Yeshua was all about radical counter-culturalism and he was all about proclaiming repentance. That is something we can reflect on this season. What do you need to repent of? How have you compromised? Have you been a coward when it comes to cultural pressure? Have you backed down in the face of criticism? Have you just given up on God's law because it was an inconvenience to your life instead of boldly standing for truth, instead of boldly standing for justice and faithfulness and holiness? Have you failed to prioritize the things that matter to God because you refuse to deny yourself? This is your opportunity to confess your sins. This Hanukkah season is your opportunity to repent and to rededicate your life to him. If the worship team is still available, you guys can come back up. So to summarize, Hanukkah is a very important holiday. Number one, it reminds us of God's commitment to the Jewish people and how we are called to stand with them against those who want to destroy them. Number two, Hanukkah reminds us to prioritize God's will in our lives. And number three, Hanukkah is all about the Messiah. And he has delivered us from sin and death. He has delivered us from our oppressors. And he has dedicated us as people of God. So let's start living like it. Heavenly Father, I thank you for helping me get through this message. I just want to thank you, Lord, for who you are. I want to thank you for your mercy, your kindness, and your grace. And just as the Maccabees did, Lord, as we... as we take on this mission to deny ourselves and to follow you, as we take on that mission to love our neighbor as ourself and to love you, to prioritize your will above our own, as we take on that mission like the Maccabees did, Lord, I just start that mission with repentance. We start that mission by asking you to forgive us our sins, Lord, and to have mercy on us, to be with us, Lord, to strengthen us, Those times when we feel weak, those times when we feel like we just want to give up or that things are just too hard. Lord, I ask that you strengthen us, that you help us be like the Maccabees, trusting in you, prioritizing your will, your word, and not giving in. We love you. I pray all these things in your son Yeshua's name. Amen. You sing the Shema with me. Shema Yisrael Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance toward you and give you his peace. In the name of our Tsar Shalom, our Prince of Peace, our Prince of Peace, Yeshua. Amen. Shabbat Shalom, family.

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