

## My Personal Montage

Rabbi Michael Fel

*Shanah Tovah!*

It is so wonderful and such a blessing to begin the New Year together with you. To be in your presence and feel the warmth of your *n'shamot*.

I wish you and your families a *Shanah Tovah u'metukah* – a wonderful and sweet new year filled with health, happiness, and a connection to something greater than yourself.

I have always marveled at the speed at which the media is able to honor and pay tribute when a world leader or celebrity passes away. It seems that almost instantly, they are able to provide evidence to a person's legacy: old interviews, movies, speeches, volunteer engagements, all meticulously edited to portray the person in a positive light.

It wasn't until I was much older that I realized that many of those montages had already been prepared for years and were simply waiting for their time to be aired.

And just as I enjoy watching the life in review of famous individuals, also I enjoy watching those end-of-the-year montages that show all the political, entertainment, and sports highlights of the year.

As someone who dabbles in video editing, I was impressed that they always remembered all the good clips, until I realized that someone was charged with archiving those particular segments since the first day of the year.

Tonight, as we gather here in this sacred space to mark the beginning of the New Year, we are very much in an in between, liminal state, reflecting on the previous year and looking forward to the future.

Tonight, when you return home, and over the course of the next 10 days, I invite you to imagine what your personal 5774 video montage would include. What pictures, quotes, videos encapsulate who you are? What visual images represent your work in the previous year?

Believe it or not, we live in a world that does this for us automatically. A few months ago, Facebook, actually created end-of-the-year videos for all their members. How? They played some inspirational music, and plastered the first and last picture on your facebook account and then listed the most active posts and pictures during the year.

My video began with me as a college student at the University of Miami. Showed some photos of my time in Israel, and then shared the highlights of the year:

A selfie of Nadav, Shayna and I hanging out in our bedroom. An announcement following the Boston Marathon bombing that Shayna and I were okay. And a picture of me showing off the Muppet that Shayna bought me for my birthday.

I got sentimental – I thought it was neat. But it didn't really capture the previous year. It didn't show the conversations that happened privately, the personal achievements, and struggles.

It didn't show our time in the hospital with Nadav. Moving into our new home. The wonderful memories that were made on Shabbat and on holidays.

One minute of video and a dozen photos cannot represent all the achievements and challenges of the year.

And I don't mean to be down on Facebook – the fact that I have my own movie is neat – but it made me think...which moments would you include?

Would your job promotion dominate the video? Who else would be in your video? Would most of the pictures be from vacation? At work? At home?

Which moments would you omit?

Would you take out all the times you struggled? Would you omit the times you overreacted? Would you delete the times when you weren't your smoothest, suavest self?

Which moments do you want to relive?

Would you only relive the highlights? Would you want to revisit the challenging moments?

Are there any parts you'd like to provide a voice-over for, to give your perspective?

Rosh Hashanah and the High Holy Days come every year to remind us that we are the directors, producers and editors of our lives. Despite any mistakes in the previous year, we can decide what the story will be in the New Year.

I encourage us all to become the architects of our life's movie, so when we gather next year at this time, we can all sit back, watch the proverbial video, and not only "like it" but also give it two thumbs up.