

Session 111
Ki Tavo – Return Home
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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_Cz5ypF1qI

Ari

Shalom, shalom! Can you hear me? Give me a thumbs up! Hi, good to see everybody! So good to see all of your beautiful faces. Really, shalom Esther, how are you healing? How's everything going? Karen and Yitzchak Sloan, hi! Yitzchak, that is a fantastic beard. You look like a sage of Israel, wow! Krista, good to see you! You need to tell Kara that her painting of the House of Prayer has become the image, the logo of the Farm. It's on every bottle of wine, it's all over Judea, it's all over the world. Everybody loves it, she's changed the whole game. I'm just loving at looking at everybody. Rob, Stephanie, are you guys in a tractor trailer? It looks beautiful! Naomi, Judy, Rivka, where's Ezra? Rivka, where's Ezra? He should be here. And Leah, I wish I could give everybody a shout-out. It's good to see everybody, really, really, it is.

This Fellowship, please HaShem, allow it to land. This has been a real journey for me. It's been...rarely do I face an inner war like I did going into this Fellowship. Because there's so much to talk about, so much to say, and I'm also in a little bit of a place of...I feel like I have more to learn from you guys than you do from me. But anyways, you know, as we're approaching Rosh Hashana, I really, I've been feeling similar emotions that I remember having in the past. And, you know, in past years, like the feeling that I'm not using this time as wisely as I could. I feel like we know each other from years together now. You probably already know, "Oh again, Ari's falling short in his own head," but I don't know! I am thinking it's going to be different. I feel like the King is in the field and I'm not taking advantage of this special opportunity like I should or like I could. Have any of you been feeling like this, or am I alone here? Raise your hand if you've been feeling like this. Ok. Cal, I'm glad your hand is down. That's good. I'm glad you're taking advantage.

But you know, while I have the feeling that I would and maybe should feel like this no matter how much I take advantage of these powerful days, I'll always feel like I'm falling short. Maybe that's the right way to feel, but I'm really doing my best to harness that feeling, to inspire myself moving forward in the time that I do have left going up to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, rather than looking back and beating myself up about the past. We got to really move past that stuff. And I think that that's part of what I want to focus on today. Really letting go of any feelings of you know falling short or of doubts and replacing them with a simple faith, like an unsophisticated faith. That's the most beautiful thing. Replacing them with the faith that whatever right now looks like, that's the will of the King. And the greatest service we can do is to have serenity of our hearts and just accept it lovingly. And I'm trying to do that with this Fellowship, also. And just seeing all of your faces, I was a little bit nervous coming into it, but

seeing your loving faces, it just relaxes me. And I really appreciate that. I feel like there is no messing up with you guys.

But either way, I wanted to share with you sort of a unique speech that I delivered on Shabbat evening in our House of Prayer because as many of you know, in synagogues around the world, the beautiful singing Shabbat service that we welcome Kabbalat Shabbat, greeting the Shabbat, lecha dodi and everything, we finished that and it's sort of like punctuated by a d'var Torah. Like there's a gap between the end of the greeting of the Shabbat Service and the actual evening service. And usually someone gives a little speech, a little Torah idea, something inspiring before the Shabbat service begins. So at the Farm, it's usually either me or Jeremy that has that distinct honor. And I think all of you in the Fellowship have really helped me polish the skill of sharing where I am right now. Like, I really think this Fellowship is being increasingly built upon that. That being as real with each other as we can possibly be. I see it reflected in your messages to me and your Whatsapp's, and your emails. And if I haven't responded to your emails, please forgive me. You don't know how crazy the Farm has been. It's been so overwhelming. And that's why I prefer Whatsapp's. I can just send you a voice message, rather than typing on my phone and the whole thing. Please forgive me. But anyways, I'm nervous because I can see I'm already ADHD. But that's ok, that's alright.

So, you know, even if I'm feeling confused or uninspired, that's what we got to do. We got to just share where we are right now, because ultimately that's the most inspiring. That is the way to really connect with HaShem, to connect with each other. To be real with how we are right now. And so, confused and uninspired, that would really describe my speech on Friday night. I've never given a speech like that before. I stood up and I started to speak with a question, as we often do. I asked a genuine question that's been weighing on me. I think this year, past years, but more this year, it's been on my mind as we approach Rosh Hashana, and it seems like such a basic question. And the question really is like, "Why is Rosh Hashana the day of judgment, why does it fall before Yom Kippur, the day of Atonement?" Shouldn't it be the reverse? You first do tshuva, you first repent, and then you're judged. We're first judged, and then we repent? It's such a basic question. I don't know why it took me 42 years to actually articulate it that way and that clearly. And you know, I've definitely struggled with it in the past, but this year it's been bothering me a lot. And when things are on my mind, I ask everybody. I'm talking about if I get in a taxi, I ask the driver. If I get on a bus, I ask literally whoever's next to me. Which is one of the beautiful things about Israel. That you actually can anticipate a phenomenal answer from the guy that's sitting next to you on the bus.

So anyways, I stood up in Synagogue, in Shul, and I asked that question. And then, I was just silent. I didn't answer it. I didn't have the answer. It was just a question. I don't think anyone's ever done that before. They just get up and ask a question and then just stand there waiting for everybody to answer them. And you know, and then people were just quiet, and so I said, "If you want to hear a thought I have, I'll share a thought, but it's just a brief thought."

And I made it clear to everybody that I didn't have the answer, and the thought didn't really make any sense. And then there was just quiet. And then I sat down and there was just silence. And then of course, Jeremy...explosive applause from Jeremy. So my totally insane speech, where I just asked this question, explosive applause and then everybody laughed very heartily at Jeremy's response.

And while we sat there together, some people actually threw out some potential answers. Nothing that really satisfied me too much. Until Havdalah time, you know toward the end of Shabbat where we're all together. And again, for the 947th time, I threw out the question. And who rose to the occasion? But Tehila Gimpel. Tehila, she finally gave me an answer that actually put my soul at rest. And I wanted to share it with you. But that wouldn't have made a lot of sense because it wasn't my idea and I would probably butcher it. And rather than me trying to do so, I decided to just beg Tehila to please give it over...share it with the Fellowship because she loves you guys, we all love you guys and we talk about you guys all the time. We pray for you all the time. You have no idea what a presence the Fellowship is in our minds and in our hearts. So I said, "Tehila, not for me, but for the Fellowship could you share?" So here is Tehila!

Tehila

Hi guys. I hope you're all doing well. We are really wrapping it up now. Wrapping up Elul coming up on Rosh Hashana. And we had such a lovely Shabbat yesterday. And we were lucky enough to have Ari and Shaena come over and Ari raised such a thought-provoking and interesting question. I thought I would bring it up here with you guys as well. So Ari, please correct me if I'm botching your question. But this is at least how I understood it.

What is up with the difference between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur? Seemingly, these are both days where we say HaShem is judging us, HaShem is deciding what is going to happen next year. Now, Yom Kippur, we can kind of wrap our minds around because we spend the whole day hitting our chests, saying all of the things that we've done wrong and really focusing on doing tshuva. On Rosh Hashana, we're also told that this is the day where HaShem is deciding what's going to happen to us next year, looking back at our sins, and we're thinking about all this. And after starting the process of tshuva on Elul, why do we need all of these days? Why not just get it over with in one grand terrifying trial where HaShem decides what's happening to us and why is it on Rosh Hashana that we don't do any type of admission of sin, none of the prayers are talking about our sins, we're not thinking about examining our actions. We're hearing the shofar, we're talking about HaShem's Kingship in the world, what is up with it? If these days are doing the same thing, then why don't we just have one? And if we need more than one day, why are the prayers and the internal works of these days so different?

So, the way I understand this really comes...I draw on my practice of law, to kind of make sense of this. Anybody who's dealt with the legal system knows that in a criminal trial, you always

have two stages. The verdict and the sentencing. They're not the same. We kind of imagine someone going to court and going to trial and they're being tried and that's just sort of one blob. But it's not one blob, there are two distinct parts. Now what happens in the first part of any trial, for those of you who have had jury duty, you surely are familiar with this. On the first part of the trial, it has nothing to do with what kind of person you are. Did you do the crime, is there evidence, are there witnesses, is there a video tape, is there forensic evidence of this crime? And the judge or the jury, they hear the evidence and decide what was the actual reality of what happened? Now either you did it or you didn't. And if you're found guilty, that is the verdict. This is what happened. You did this thing. Period, end of story. You might be really nice, you might be a jerk, it doesn't make a difference. You did it, period.

Now there comes a second stage. It usually happens on a totally different day. This is not on the same trial. Then you have another hearing on sentencing. A sentencing trial works totally different. You don't hear evidence about what happened. You don't hear witnesses about what happened. You hear character testimony. Character testimony is a whole other ballpark. You might bring your first-grade teacher to talk about what a great kid you are. You might bring your therapist to talk about all the internal work you've been doing to try to stop doing that type of crime. You can bring somebody to testify about all the other nice things you do. Maybe a letter that you wrote to the victim to show how remorseful you are. Those things become relevant only in sentencing.

So the way I look at it, is that we have Rosh Hashana and we have Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashana, our tshuva is not the story here. The question is, what have you done in this past year? And it's not always an easy mirror to look into. It's real, it's real, and we are taking this time and looking back at the year and taking honest stock of what happened. Where did I fail, where did I make it, where was I good, where was I bad? And it's not pretty, it's not easy, but it's the truth. And that is what we do on Rosh Hashana. And that is why all of our prayers, they're not about...Oh, I'm so sorry and I'm going to try to be better. Put that on the side. That's not the issue right now. We have three main motifs on Rosh Hashana. The Kingship of HaShem, Zichronot (memories), and hearing the shofar. All of those really in my mind, speak to the same idea. HaShem as the King, HaShem as the ultimate judge who knows what happened. Right? And there's the shofar where we're declaring our recognition of that Kingship, and Zichronot, memories. HaShem opening up the metaphoric book of history of memories and looking back at what we did and us looking along with Him, honestly, at what we did in the past year. And that's that day and it's a serious thing.

Then, there's Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is something that can only come after that. After HaShem has taken stock of our past year. We've taken stock of our past year, without whitewashing it with...well, all my promises for the future and all of my other good things. You've done the real hard look. Then comes Yom Kippur. In my mind, that's a sentencing trial. That's where you bring character witnesses. Let's say a guy was convicted of a DUI, driving

under the influence of alcohol. It doesn't matter if he's nice or not. Breathalyzer...was he drunk or was he not drunk? Now once we know that, well, now let's bring our character witnesses. Has he gone to rehab? Has he apologized to the people he hurt? Has he made an effort to stay sober? That's the Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is where we say to HaShem, "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry, look at the tshuva I've been doing for Elul. Look at everything else I've done. Look at my good intentions for this coming year and take that into consideration when You decide how to respond to the truth of my last year."

So, I think that's kind of the order that we see in real life trials and the order that is the underlying wisdom of these special days. Jeremy brought the great explanation...he taught me that Maimonides says, he uses the word for this, "aricha." Aricha means editing. It's like a director saying, "cut." Sometimes, you know, the movie could go on forever, but the director has to say, "Cut, now we're editing this." Rosh Hashana is our time to look at the footage that we've gotten over the last year and Yom Kippur is when we get a chance to do the editing. Ok, well what are we going to change? How are we going to make this better?

So, I think it's an important thing to understand how this kind of guides us in where we're going to focus our prayers and focus our work of these days. And it shows us that the book of prayers, the liturgy that we have is not just liturgy that was thrown together, but there's a really deep wisdom here showing us the chronological process that we need to go through coming in on the new year. So, I hope that's helpful to you guys in the work that we're doing in preparing for Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. And I wish you guys all a great week. Bye!

Ari

How great was that? Right? That's like...that just resonates as true. It's like in a court. And how beautiful and unexpected that the Israeli court system, as flawed as it really is, does in some way reflect the Divine process of judgment that Tehila would be able to equate those things? I just found that so fascinating, so insightful. Rosh Hashana is where this judge decrees, decides our decree, based on the facts. And then on Yom Kippur is when we realize that the judge is also our Abba, that He's our Father. And there's extenuating circumstances, taking everything into account. Did I understand that? I don't know, I think I did. Anyways, I want to share a little bit more about that with you, but first, I want to start by introducing Jeremy Gimpel who I'm sure will be sharing some very beautiful thoughts with you. Jeremy, where are you? Is that a real background? No, it's not.

Jeremy

That is one of the most beautiful sunrises that we've ever captured here on the Farm, so I just wanted to share it with everyone. Because I have written a book about waking up early in the morning. And the process of prayer. And since coming back to Israel, I have not woken up early even once. And it is embarrassing. And I'm working on it, I'm trying. Saturday night, it's like that's it! It's Sunday, it's a new day. I'm going to stand in front of the Fellowship. What

kind of a person could I be to write a book about waking up early and taking the time to pray and to meditate, to learn and to journal and to get your life in order and just be unable to do that. It's like, unbelievable! And Noam, my youngest son, on Wednesday of last week said, "Hey Ima, isn't it funny that Abba wrote a book about waking up early?" He actually said those words! And I have to like live with that now. Like how dangerous it is to sort of like put out an ideal that you're striving for, but then you have to live up to that ideal. And here I am on Elul trying to like figure this out. And like totally crashing and burning on the ideal that I so much believe in. And I think that that's really important. Because just because we're not living out the ideal that we know to be the ideal life, doesn't mean that we're failing. It just means that we keep on aiming up. I'm going to keep on at it. And where your ratzon is, where you want to be, what your desire is, is really where you are. And for whatever reason I just...the evil inclination is so sophisticated, that every morning, it's somehow beating me. But I'm going to get at it because that's really where my desire is and really that's what the month of Elul is about and that's what I wanted to talk about today.

Because Elul actually isn't so much about action. Every month there's a certain attribute – a part of the body, a part of the mind, a part of your heart, that is to be fixed or to be focused on or to be developed. And the month of Elul is all about our thoughts. It's the month of getting our thoughts in order. And that's key because we're going into the new year, if we have clarity of thought, of who we want to be, what we want to do, what we want to accomplish, how we want to accomplish it, and what kind of person we want to be, what things we don't want to do and the things we do want to do. The more clarity we have on that, the better our year is going to be.

And so, there was a football coach that I remember that once said, "The most important thing is to be great at the fundamentals." Like, don't get all fancy-shmancy and try to do amazing plays with the football. Just get really good at the basics. And so, what I've been doing recently is, last week I had a very challenging day. It was Thursday. And Ari and I went to go and visit a friend of ours. And he's a dear friend, like a soul-brother to me and Ari. And his daughter passed away. And it was devastating. It was so hard. It was the worst shiva-house that I've been at. And it was just...he came up to me. He said, "It just feels like my life is over." And when he said that to me, I just burst out crying because what words could be said to console him, I just didn't know what to say.

And I'm like, man, that's been with me now for days, trying to figure out, what are the basics here? And that is, arguably the most extreme example that I've encountered, definitely in the last few months. But I wanted to go back to the basics and the principles of emunah. Because going into this year, not only do we want to be proactive about what we want to do, what we want to accomplish, how we want to live, who we want to be. But I also want to set into motion, how I want to respond to the challenges that I know are going to come. It's just a matter of time until challenges come and I want to know, I want to prepare myself going into

the year, what are the fundamentals of emunah that I want to have? Because a lot of times we talk about emunah as action, loyalty in action, faith in practice, and that's true. But Rabbi Nachman of Breslav really brings principles of emunah that are not action oriented, but more mind-oriented, faith-oriented, psychologically-oriented. The paradigm through which we see the world is also another form of emunah. And so what is he saying? He says there are three principles to emunah. I actually made a little slide for you.

3 Principles of Emunah

1. Everything that happens if from above.
2. Everything that happens is for a reason.
3. Everything that happens is for the good.

Principle number one, something happens to us in the world. Everything that happens, happens from HaShem. Nothing here is random, nothing here is from a force counter to God. Everything is one, and everything happens from above. Everything that happens to us, happens from HaShem.

The second principle, is that everything that happens to us, happens for a reason. Something that happens to us, is not just happenstance. There is guidance that's happening there, there's a spice cart that we need to be aware of, there's something that's happening and it's not just random. It's happening for a reason.

And the third reason is that everything that happens to us, happens for the good. That the most challenging situations, the hardest things that occur to us, somehow, if we just have the strength and the perseverance and the ability to just keep walking, with the belief that whatever is happening here, ultimately it's for the ultimate good. That somehow, this is a part of the process and ultimately one door might be shut, another door is soon to open. One window is closed because another one is going to be open. Everything that happens, happens from HaShem, everything that happens, happens for a reason and everything that happens is ultimately for the good. And so, I've just been thinking about that over and over and over. Getting those fundamentals back into place.

And then this Shabbat table, Friday night, my son, Akiva, who's now in the 10th grade, said, "Abba, I learned something really beautiful about Elul. And it really has to do with emunah also. I want to share it at the Shabbat table." I'm like, "Yeah, absolutely, wonderful. I'd love you to share, I'd love to hear what you have to say about Elul." And Akiva said, "How do we know what we're supposed to fix in our lives? Meaning, we believe we're sent down with a soul-mission. Something to fix. Tikkun olam, but a tikkun ha'nefesh. We have a tikkun, we have a fixing, we have a calling that is a specifically, perfectly designed calling and a fixing that is for each and every person in the world. How do you know what your tikkun is? How do you know your personal fixing that you need to do, that you need to go through in this world? Because that would really help us if we really want to align ourselves, getting ready for the new year, how are we supposed to know that?"

And Akiva said that he learned in the writings of Chassidut, that the thing that you are most struggling with, the thing that's hardest for you, the thing that you're like, "Ahh...why is this thing in my life right now? That's the thing that is a constant obstacle that I need to overcome. That's like a constant thing that's blocking me. That's the thing that's always holding me back. That's like really the hardest thing for me to deal with in life...you should know, that's calling you forward. That that challenge that's being set before you is indeed a calling in your life, from that side." And then he said, "And if you have a gift, it says that gift should be used to bring more light, to use that gift to plant trees of light in the world." So the challenges are our calling to fix and our gifts are callings to spread those gifts.

And so to me, just kind of going back to the fundamental principles of how I want, how I choose to react to the things that occur to me, how I see the challenges in my life, how I'm going to approach all of the unknowns... you know, we're still working, Ari and I on a solution for this coming winter. And we just now got the proposal for solar panels. I'm not going to...it's a little bit scary for me. I mean, I believe HaShem has a path and He's paving a path for us to accomplish this mission. But it's freezing cold on the Arugot Farm in the winter-time. If they cut us off from electricity, I mean I have a wood burning stove, I guess we could all sleep around the stove, if we need to. But like, there's a little bit of like anxiety that's coming, but I just keep on thinking, everything that's happening. The fact that for whatever reason, the government is not allotting enough electricity for a community that they know is expanding, it's happening for a reason and it's happening for the good.

And so, maybe this is exactly the direction that HaShem is sending us, that through this struggle, turning our Farm green, becoming energy independent, maybe that is a vision that is a Messianic vision of like a beautiful green eco-Farm that has its own solar farm. I don't know. But I just am trying to like approach the challenges this year with those fundamentals of emunah. To really just go over them, over and over again. That when those challenges come, we're prepared, mentally, physically, psychologically, spiritually.

I just want to bless everyone that this Elul as we really come close to just...a day of reckoning. A day it's like, "cut," here we are. How's our life going? That's what Rosh Hashana is according to Tehila and Maimonides. That going forward with all the good and all the bad and all the challenges, that we take those principles of emunah to give us strength and direction. And that should be our guiding light in the world.

Ari

That was beautiful, Jeremy. Quick question. I don't want to put you on the spot, but I do have a question about that. There's three principles. Isn't the third principle inclusive of the second? Meaning, if it says, "Everything is for the good," doesn't that imply that everything is for a reason? Those are from Rebbe Nachman?

Jeremy

Yeah, that's a really good question. It's not exactly the same thing. Meaning they're close to the same thing, but one demands a question. One is more like an existential posture that I approach every occurrence. This is for the good. It's not that the devil came in here and did something evil and out-smarted God. No-no-no. Everything that happens is ultimately from the good. But the second one, really forces us to look at the Divine wisdom that is within everything. The second one is saying that it's happening for a reason, ask the question. What is this speaking to me now? What am I being called to do now? What is the right response to whatever is happening? Why is this happening? It's for the good, but I also want to know the reason. And Rebbe Nachman says that reason is accessible. That even if you can't see the ultimate reason, you can find enough to take the next steps forward. So the first one is that everything is from HaShem. There is nothing other than HaShem in this world. Everything is from Him. The second thing is, everything happens for a reason. And if we're open enough to ask, "Why is this happening? What is it here to teach me? What is it here to guide me?" That's the second stage.

And the third stage is just the posture. I haven't found out the reason yet. I know that there's a reason, but at least I know ultimately, it's for the good.

Ari

That's good. Ok, thank you, thank you. And yes, regarding the winter's coming. You spoke to Gavriel, he's like traumatized, from the first day of the summer, he's already getting concerned about the winter cause the winter's here can really be brutal. And Shaena was saying that she's a little bit PTSD from the winter cause now that we have these little kids, it's a little bit nerve-racking not to have energy when you need it most of course. But you know like you said, there's a reason for it. Maybe the solar-panels is where HaShem is leading us. That's also, you know, with the sheep. We had to build up our flock of sheep for all the reasons that we've shared in the past, that it protects the Land, creates concentric circles of a buffer zone and all of these different things. But in the end of the day, maybe HaShem is just wanting us to be shepherds again like our forefathers. The children of Jacob went to Pharaoh and he said, "who are you?" They said, "We're shepherds, our fathers are shepherds." And maybe that's what this whole thing is about also.

So that's really inspiring, Jeremy. Thank you for sharing that. And don't beat yourself up about not waking up early in the morning. Yes, you wrote a book about waking up early in the morning. You haven't woke up past 9:30 since you've been back, but I remember when you were vegan for a little bit and you were in the New York Times about your vegan...I'm just needling you, I'm just joking. You are an inspiration to me all the time and even though you're not waking up early, you're getting up earlier all the time and you're running and you're working at it and you've been a really positive influence on me since you've been back.

And now I want to share more, but there's more Gimpel to come! Because it is my greatest honor to now introduce one of the bright, shining stars in Judea. And I love this young lady like she's my own daughter and I'm grateful for her babysitting Dvash on Shabbat afternoon so that Shaena and I could nap. Anyways, with no further ado, let me introduce to you the one and only, Eden Gimpel.

Eden

Hello everyone, welcome back to the Kid's Corner. I wanted to share with you a little thought I had. If I'd offer to you this 200 shekel bill, you would probably take it. If I crumble it like this, you'd still take it. If I stepped on it like this, you'd still take it. Why? Because it's worth 200. So many times in life, we feel like because we're stepped on so much, we lost our value. We didn't. This week's parsha, God is giving us a list of sins that if we will do, a list of consequences. Why wouldn't God just choose a people that will listen to Him? Because we still didn't lose our value. Even if we get consequences, we might get these little crumbs. That doesn't matter. I think that comes to teach us deep lesson. God will give us tests in life. Some of them are harder, some of them are easier. Even if we feel like we fail, and because of that we've lost value in His eyes, it's not true. We did it. And there's always a chance to make it better. Bye.

Ari

You know, if you want to look at what...you know the word "nachas," it's sort of a Yiddish thing, but it means like "pride." Just holy, good pride. Look at the face of Jeremy Gimpel when Eden is speaking. I love looking at it. Bizrat HaShem, I'll be able to experience that too. And just so you know, Eden and I had a long debate. She was asking me if I could give her a \$20 bill because she wanted to make all of you feel comfortable. And maybe you wouldn't know what shekels are and she really wanted a dollar bill. And I said, the Fellowship appreciates the authenticity of Israeli currency. So, we got the shekels and she's just so great. I can't tell you how grateful Shaena and I are that we have the sweet, young, holy Gimpel girls like Eden and Emunah to be role models for Dvash. There's no one I would rather have for a neighbor, let alone my ONLY neighbor and we feel like we struck gold. So thank you, Eden.

And what Eden was sharing there, in some ways I feel like I should just end the Fellowship. It would be so good if I just stopped now and I just didn't harang you with my own confusions. But in some ways, it was an extension of what Tehila was sharing. That no matter how we may perceive ourself, no matter how much we may focus on our own shortcomings, and our flaws, HaShem sees us with eyes that we can't fathom. And He loves us like a father loves his children. I think that perhaps is the reason that what we just shared spoke to me on such a deep level. Because of that balance. I think that you know what Tehila was talking about – between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, that balance of Avinu Malkeinu, our Father, our King.

Rabbi Carmi Wiseman actually shares a really beautiful insight. That Avinu Malkeinu it's a beautiful prayer that we say on Rosh Hashana. In a lot of ways, it's a central prayer that the rest of the service revolves around, at least that's my experience. But it really is what Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur is really about. You know, one of the most beautiful prayers on Rosh Hashana is that prayer. Every verse starts with the words, "Avinu Malkeinu." And it ends with a different prayer, or a hope, or an aspiration to stay away from bad things. Avinu Malkeinu, HaShem, our Father, our King, keep us away from drought and famine and robbery and let us have health and peace and prosperity. But every verse starts with Avinu Malkeinu and ends with something else.

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But what he explains is that the most important part is not the ending of each verse with the specific prayer. But really to keep on saying again and again the beginning. The beginning – Avinu, Malkeinu, the first two words. Meaning that if you were to look for just two words to repeat on, and meditate during these holy moments that are leading up to Rosh Hashana, I really think it would be those two words. Just close your eyes. Avinu Malkeinu, Avinu Malkeinu, Avinu Malkeinu. Because those two words really encapsulate the simultaneously co-existing truth that HaShem is both our Father and our King. And each role is critical because either one without the other is lacking and would be an incomplete relationship that is just not reflective of reality. Because yes, HaShem is our King, that's true. And not only our King, but the King of the world, the King of all humanity, whether or not they recognize. It's true. HaShem is the King of all of creation.

But if we relate to Him exclusively in that role as our King, well there's a lot of fear involved in that. And it's hard for us to relate to the whole idea of a king nowadays, anyways. Because there really aren't very many real kings in the world that are truly powerful, sort of in the historic, authoritarian sense of the word. Even the new King Charles of England doesn't really have any political power at all. It's like a symbolic role. Maybe, I was thinking, maybe Vladimir Putin is the closest thing I can think of to a modern king. And he of course is a bad one, which many of them become and if you're not rooted in the Torah, then in enough time, and you're king and you have all this power, it will corrupt you absolutely. And you will think that you are God and you can do whatever you want. Which is why that system, that monarchial system is really so dangerous, even though it has the potential to be great.

Just this past week in Russia, the 8th Oil executive oligarch, coincidentally plummeted to his death from a window of a tall building. Coincidentally of course. Anyways, that image of a king, that's what the image summons. A king is an intimidating and fear inducing figure. You don't imagine a king having much of a vested interest in you, you personally. Or even really knowing who you are. A king would almost definitely have no personal affection for you and if you violate the king's law...or your interests crossed with his, well you're going to fall out of that window. That is most definitely and historically what happens. The sentence is death.

So if we relate to HaShem solely as that, as some people do...some people do. I was thinking, I just went down to the vineyards. And our vineyards are exploding with beautiful grapes, table grapes. And of course it's the holy Sabbatical fruits, which is very, very, very holy. And a lot of people are so afraid of the great holiness of the fruit that they won't eat it. And instead they'll buy fruits that are imported from Chamas in Gaza because they're so afraid of the kedusha, of the sacred fruits of the Sabbatical year. So that's a crazy thing. But that's just an example of fear overtaking you. And that would be...it's fear-driven...it's so tragic to have that relationship with HaShem. Because on the higher level, on the deeper level, HaShem is first and foremost, our Father.

But if the Father relationship is solely how we relate to HaShem, then we would quite likely take advantage of all of those well-springs of love and compassion and forgiveness that we know is there. And we would be too permissive and too lax in following His Word and His ordinances and decrees, like we see so many children do. Especially nowadays when they have a father or mother who as they say, "Spare the rod," right? That spoils the child.

And so, there's actually a story that Rav Carmi brings from the Talmud about when the nation of Israel found ourselves in the midst of this terrible drought. And there are two rabbis – Rabbi Elazar and Rabbi Akiva that tried to solve it. And Rabbi Elazar prayed twenty-four different prayers. And declared a public fast day, but the drought continued. But Rebbe Akiva just cried out to the heavens and said, "Avinu Malkeinu, Avinu Malkeinu. Ain lanu Melak ela atah," Our Father, our King, we have no one but You. For Your own sake, have mercy and compassion on us." And the story goes that it was just that one prayer from the depth of his heart, calling out, "Avinu Malkeinu," and the rain began to fall immediately. And why did that prayer work? Because he addressed HaShem in completion. Recognizing both roles at the very same time.

And you know, I feel like I have a different Rosh Hashana that I'm going to have this year than I've ever had in the past. And I think hopefully it's true for all of us. Every Rosh Hashana, every holiday should be totally new for us when we arrive at it. Because we're new people, we've gone through so much. But for the first time, on Rosh Hashana, this Rosh Hashana, I am the father of two. Before Shiloh was born, I remember telling Shaena that I was afraid that I would never be able to love him like I love Dvash because I was already just maxed out. She was already taking up 110% of my parental love budget. And while at the very beginning, I really feared I was right. Because Shaena was with him all the time and I was like, "I don't really feel like I love him yet, if I'm going to be honest." It didn't take long, I held him once or twice and then all of a sudden, he too was using up 110% of my parental love budget without detracting from even the smallest way from my love for Dvash. And we're flawed and human and finite. We simply can't imagine, we can't fathom the overwhelming love that HaShem has for each and every one of us.

But you know, Dvash, she's approaching three years old. And I find that I'm having to discipline her more and more as she's sort of discovering her own independent identity. And she's experimenting with boundaries and borders and leading her often to blatantly and flagrantly disobey. Even on stuff she doesn't mind doing, she wants to do it anyways. "No! No!" Which is also cute. But it can also be frustrating, and it can also be downright dangerous when it comes to something like crossing the street. So there are times that I have to put her on the punishment step. I don't know if that's what it should be called, I just had to make it up on the spot, so, it's called the punishment step which seems really unoriginal, and maybe not even that effective. But when I do...

Jeremy

We called it the "naughty step," Ari, the "naughty step."

Ari

The "naughty step," that's better. Naughty step, done. Copyright Jeremy Gimpel, the naughty step. But anyways, when I put her on the punishment step, the naughty step, she cries. Which of course starts the most heart-breaking full-faced frown and just quickly evolves to outright weeping. And when this happens, oy, Jeremy you've seen my eyes, it's heart-breaking! My heart is exploding with the desire to embrace her and to comfort her. And it takes every drop of my strength and my gvurah and my resistance not to do that until the punishment is over. And I really believe that is a nearly perfect parallel to the Father/King relationship that HaShem has with us. I've heard it taught that actually HaShem puts us in our lives all of these different multi-faceted relationships from husband to wife to father to sons of father, to father to parents to children. All of these relationships are put in our lives to begin with in order for us to be able to fathom our relationship with HaShem. And the different facets that that has. Our relationship which is that is of a servant to a King as well as the relationship of a child to a father at the very same time.

Which brings us in some way to the Torah portion of Ki Tavo. Because not just Rosh Hashana is coming up, we had a Torah portion, too. And you know with this shiva that Jeremy was talking about, the Rabbi spoke so beautifully, I couldn't help but to think that our beloved friend, Nati, who lost his oldest daughter, that it's in this Torah portion where we give, HaShem demands of us our first fruits. And we give it willingly. And I think that he lost that, I've been walking around with this heavy on me and just trying my best to just remind myself that he and his wife are just the greatest tzadakim. They're warriors of light. And what does HaShem do to warriors of light? Gives them darkness. I don't know, I can't understand, I can't understand it, but I just judge them as HaShem is putting His faith in them for all of redemption in some way.

But anyways, let's go to Parashat, Ki Tavo. Let's start with the first verse:

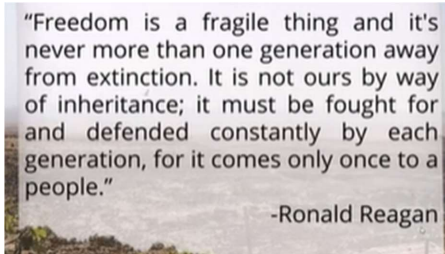
It will be when you enter the land that Hashem is giving you as a heritage, and you possess it and settle in it, you shall take some of every first fruit of the soil, which you harvest from the land that Hashem is giving you, put it in a basket, and go to the place where Hashem will choose to establish the divine name.
-Deuteronomy 26:1-2

So this is the...Moshe Rabbenu, by the way, this is all the last day of Moshe Rabbenu's life. So it was a busy day, right? And this is him telling the nation that when they enter the Land, and it's both conquered, which the sages say takes 7 years, and then allocated, which takes another 7 years, that the farmers would take their first ripened fruits and present them to the Cohen, to the priests, which is a grandiose moment. It was accompanied

by music and dancing and celebration because in many ways, it was the moment that was the culmination of all Jewish history up until that point. The long journey of Avraham to Isaac to Jacob into Egypt, through the desert, the whole journey was worthwhile just so the Jew upon entering, conquering, and settling the Land of Israel could offer his first fruits to HaShem. And thereby, really, dedicate everything he has to HaShem. It's his first fruits...if he gives his first fruits to HaShem, that which like is the culmination of his sweat and his toil and the whole journey. If he gives his first fruits, then all of his accomplishments, and all of his possessions belong to HaShem. These first fruits represented being on the one hand, fully immersed in the natural order and labors of this world. When we're in the desert and on the way out of Egypt, it was manna falling from heaven in the clouds. Then we enter the Land of Israel and all of a sudden, we're immersed in the laws of nature. And we're immersed in them, while at the same time we're connected to the Creator of the world in full heart-felt recognition, that all of the success and all of the victories is not the might of our own hands, but absolutely everything is from HaShem. That's what it's all about.

Now, in Deuteronomy 26:5, three psukim later from what we just read there, we find the actual script that HaShem gives us when we give over our fruits to the Cohen. It's important because this is yet another example of how the Torah teaches us the absolute critical, critical elements of knowing our story. And by our, I mean the entire nation. Not just the role of every personal Jew on an individual level. When giving over the fruits to the Cohen, each Jew is able to take their own place and understand the role that they play in the greater story. The story of the nation. And if we don't know that, we don't have anything. Because human beings we're short-sighted and we're forgetful and we're myopic by nature. And unless we go to great lengths to reaffirm our story, to revisit, and just to keep that story in our minds and in our conscious and in the forefront of what our national narrative is. Our personal narrative and our national narrative, we have nothing.

By the way, I really think we see this happening in America today. And it's heart-breaking, the amount of potentially irreparable damage just one generation can do. I actually found this quote from Ronald, Rabbi Ronald Reagan. And he said:



"Freedom is a fragile thing and it's never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by way of inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people."
-Ronald Reagan

So that was Ronald Reagan. To me, it's like that's why we're going to the Cohen and we're reciting that narrative, and we're doing the Haggadah, to remember that we have the same responsibility and that same role and that same purpose to fight for our freedom and to remember that everything is from HaShem. And without HaShem we have nothing and we are nothing.

So during this portion, we see the deepest secrets to Jewish continuity, this codified, ritualized narrative therapy. You can look it up. I was going to go into it more, it's called Narrative Therapy. It's really helpful. Knowing our story and being connected to it in the deepest way imaginable. Anyways, I was going to read the whole narrative...then you shall say before HaShem and Aaron, an Aramean tried to destroy my forefather. And it goes into everything that you say to the Cohen. And HaShem, you know, to share our whole narrative, I'm going to save us the time here because we're running out. You shall be glad with all the goodness that HaShem your God is giving you your household. You and the Levite and the proselyte who is in your midst. When you finish tithing, every produce in the 3rd year, the year of the tithe, you shall give to the Levites, the proselyte, the orphan, the widow, and they shall eat in their cities until they are satisfied. Then you shall say before HaShem your God, I have removed the holy things from my house and I've also given it to the Levite, the proselyte, the orphan, and the widow according to whatever commandment that you have commanded.

And so let's stop there for a second. Why? It's there we learn that if we don't live with the reality of HaShem before our eyes, then it's a slippery slope. You start to really decline and it happens very fast. We see it happening in the whole world. We start believing in the illusions of this world, that we're the source of our own strength and that everything we have really belongs to us because WE earned it. And we don't need to tithe and we don't need to care for the widow and the orphan and then...well, you know what happens. Then we know what happens. The curses begin to fall on us. These terrifying and horrifying curses the reality of which can unfortunately which we can testify to these horrors, simply by taking a cursory look at Jewish history, by visiting any Holocaust Museum and hearing the countless personal accounts of what they endured.

Now the most famous verse from all these curses that I've quoted the most is really I think, verse 17:

I will set My face against you: you shall be routed by your enemies, and your foes shall dominate you. You shall flee though none pursues.

-Leviticus 26:17

Now those who have experienced the Holocaust first hand have testified is undoubtedly a description of the horrors they experienced. They were thoroughly routed and destroyed, 50, 100 Jews and one Nazi, and they just had no fight in them. Everyone was like, "If I were there, I would have..." You don't know. Nobody knows what they would have done. They fled in the darkness, terrified of their own shadows because that is the fear HaShem put in them because that was the punishment there.

And so, I want to share with you this story that was originally shared by the legendary, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, who is the founder of the nearby settlement of Ephrat. Do I have your blessing if we go over a little bit of time? I'm feeling a little bit of anxiety, is that ok? Give me a thumbs up if we're cool with going over a little bit. Alright, thank you, Jeremy, I appreciate that. I always read Jeremy's face in the least generous way possible. He's like.... "Alright..." Anyways, this is Rabbi Shlomo Riskin whom Jeremy and I are very close with. And the rendition I actually took directly from my dear friend, Rabbi Tulle Weiss. Anyways, so Rabbi Riskin told the following story about Rabbi Yekutiel Halberstam, who was the spiritual leader of the Klausenberger sect of the Chassidic Jews. And Rabbi Halberstam's wife, 11 children and a vast majority of his followers were murdered by all the Nazi's while he was incarcerated himself in Auschwitz and several different concentration camps. And after the war, he survived miraculously, and he resettled in Brooklyn with a small remnant of his Chassidim, who survived as well. And they took over the Beit Moshe Hospital in a neighborhood and they converted it to a large study hall and a synagogue. Anyway, Rabbi Riskin related, "I was a young boy, he left his home on Harts Street in Brooklyn on Shabbat...this Shabbat. The Shabbat of Parashat Ki Tavo. The year was 1952. And he wanted to pray with the Klausenberger Chassidim. He was a 12-year-old boy, he wanted adventure, he wanted to experience Chassidic prayer and perhaps even meet Rabbi Halberstam, himself.

Anyways, the young Rabbi Riskin, who was not a rabbi at the time, he was the young little Shlomo, he did this knowing that the Torah reading including both the blessings God promises for following his commands which are beautiful. But also, the 53 verses that describe the punishments in store for Israel when they forsake HaShem's teaching. He was just like, a little bit of a taste. I'm going to go into everything.

If you don't obey the Lord your God and all His commandments and statutes, then these curses shall come upon you... God will smite you with consumption and with a fever and with an inflammation and with an extreme burning and with the sword... God will turn your rain into dust, and it will come from the skies to destroy you... And your corpses shall be meat for all the birds of the sky and for beasts of the earth. God will smite you with madness and blindness and a confusion of the heart. God will bring a nation from afar against you, from the end of the earth, swooping down like an eagle, a nation whose language you don't understand. A haughty arrogant nation which has no respect for the old nor mercy for the young.
-Deuteronomy 28:15- 50

And there's so much more. It's a nightmare. Now Jewish tradition mandates, I don't know if you all know this, but if you go to any synagogue, you hear this, even till today that you read these verses with a low voice. Like even a whisper. In synagogue, you can barely hear it. That's the tradition, reading these verses in this way, I find that it makes it even more dramatic and shocking. But, you know, it just

makes these scary verses more terrifying. I'm not sure that was the intention, but either way. That was the custom, and the man reading from the Torah that day in Rabbi Klausenberger's shul in the synagogue did so in a soft whispered voice.

And the young Rabbi Riskin, the young Shlomo, was shocked to hear Rabbi Halberstam...Jeremy, have you heard this story? Rabbi Halberstam, he's standing at the lectern, and he commands in a stern whisper, a stern whisper...he says, "Hecher!!" Which means, louder. And the man reading from the Torah stopped in confusion and was deliberating a few moments. He was torn between the tradition and his understanding what the Rabbi seemed to be commanding him to do. And the congregation was also confused. Could it be that the Rabbi who was an expert in Jewish law and Jewish tradition was ordering them to break this tradition?

So the Torah reader, he resumed his chanting from the Torah in sort of a whisper, adhering to the tradition. And then, Rabbi Halberstam began banging, banging on the lectern with his fists, raising his voice and yelling in Yiddish, "Hecher!" I said, "Louder! Read these verses out loud! We have nothing to fear!" This is what Rabbi Halberstam was saying, "We have nothing to fear. We've already experienced the curses. Let the Master of the Universe now hear them. Let Him know that the curses have already befallen us. And let Him know that it's time for Him to send the blessings." So the Rabbi turned his face to the wall of the synagogue, probably most likely hiding his weeping while the Torah reader continued, this time in a loud voice, chanting those curses in a loud voice to the stunned and confused congregation.

Shlomo Riskin concluded. This is how Rabbi Riskin actually described the experience. He said, "I was trembling with tears cruising down my cheeks. My body was bathed in sweat. I had heard that the Rebbe had lost his wife and his 11 children in the Holocaust. But he refused to sit shiva, to mourn for them. Because he couldn't spare a moment from the task of trying to save Jewish lives by enabling them to leave Europe. He himself refused a visa to leave for America until the majority of his own chassidim, his own followers had been saved. His words seared into my heart. That's what Rabbi Riskin said.

And so after the conclusion of the prayers, Rabbi Halberstam addressed the whole congregation. He said, "My beloved brothers and sisters. Pack up your belongings. We must make one more move. Hopefully, the last one. God promises that the blessings which must follow the curses will now come. They WILL come. But not from America. The blessings will only come from Israel. It's time for us to go home. And he was true to the word. You know Rabbi Halberstam led his followers to Israel and founded a new community called Kiryat Sanz, which is in Netanya, founded in 1960. So it's still there until today. And so Rabbi Riskin, he was 12 when he heard these words. And he credits them, those words, that experience to his own courageous and historic move in which he took many of his congregants on their own aliyah journey to settle the barren hills of Judea.

Now to this day, he's still the chief rabbi of Ephrat and he's established a whole network of High Schools and Jeremy went to his High School, actually. And so you can thank Rabbi Riskin for Jeremy, or blame him, I'm just kidding. Colleges and graduate programs and seminaries and rabbinical schools and all of it, he credits to that fateful Shabbat of our Parsha in the synagogue in Brooklyn of Rabbi Halberstam. So that's just like a beautiful story and I sort of wanted to share this with you because that's what I believe where we are in the unfolding journey of tshuva on a national level. For thousands of years of exile, we've just had little choice but to sort of hyper focus on the singular, personal dimension of Rosh Hashana and of Yom Kippur. And of tshuva, and of repentance, and of return. Because you know we're still just like inhaling the flames of the curses of the exile, suffering the consequences of exile which is disconnection from each other. It's like atomization of Torah Judaism, and to each their own, sort of what it became. We were no longer a nation in our Land. So each one of us was left within as they say, the four cubits of Jewish Law and our own individual relationship to HaShem. That's what we had.

But now we're seeing the tshuva of the nation as a whole. Something that transcends our own personal experience. Sometimes it parallels it, but I find it transcends it all together. I'm seeing it play out everyday before my eyes and in my heart. And I'm probably only catching a small fraction of what's really happening right now. Because when you've been in the dark for so long, and then you're thrust into the light, it takes time before your eyes actually adjust and see what's actually happening in Israel today. And that's what I believe is slowly but surely unfolding in Israel and really in our Fellowship. At least in my life, the Fellowship plays a real part in this and I believe the Fellowship also in what's happening here on the Farm, the Fellowship is an integral part of that on a national level, too. Our eyes are adjusting and we're seeing the world and we're seeing each other. Finally, more and more as different pieces of redemption that we actually are.

And so, just this week HaShem opened my eyes to a few of these moments of national tshuva of return, at least that was my experience of them. Maybe I'm wrong, but you know when I

reflect on them, I really think they're all part of that same, beautiful tapestry of redemption that's unfolding in the world today.

So I want to start, I thought I would start with Shmuel. Shmuel is this 18-year-old kid from Canada. He was sent here by a good friend of ours, it's his nephew and he's seeking his...trying to find his way in life. And I really always respect that. Because a lot of kids are like, "No, I'm just going to do the road more traveled...I'm going to go to High School, I'm going to go to college, I going to get a job, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that..." He's looking for his way and he doesn't seem to be at peace with remaining in Canada. Even though he doesn't really know why. So he came to the Farm, and he's been living with my family, and we've been working him hard! In the barns and in the fields since he arrived, that's what he wanted. And so the other day we sent him to our friend, Gavriel, you remember we talked about Gavriel's farm? Anyways, we sent him to the farm on the other side of the valley. And here was his first radio report:



I already carried a 200 pound dead goat that smelled like...really bad smell, I'm not going to go into detail.

Anyway, I don't know why I shared that. Jeremy, I knew you were going to make a face. How do I make it where Jeremy is not on my screen of faces that I see? Anyways, he had to carry a 250 pound dead, pregnant goat on his first day here. That's sort of Judean, it was a little bit of a trauma for him. But he says he wants to go back to help Gavriel again. So it was a good experience. Anyways, I just thought that was funny.

But why do I share that with you? Because sometimes we lose track of the greater turns of history. Because of the different bumps and twists and challenges and impediments and dead sheep and dead chickens and crazy dogs and backwards steps that we face all the time that confuse us and disorient us and we lose track of the forest for the trees. And sometimes even though redemption is coming alive, we can lose hope, even though we're really right in the middle of it.

But there are moments like that that I had this week, so I took Shmuel, that's his name, to Gavriel's farm and I was leaving and my eye caught something in Gavriel's waistband, which would normally be just like the most mundane, irrelevant thing. But at the moment, it took on a whole other meaning to me. So here's the picture that I snapped.



Can you see this? This is Gavriel's waistband. I don't know if you can see it yet. But anyways, you look closely, I'm not trying to show you his underwear, but his gun and his Leatherman tool that's right next to it. Which is roughly equivalent of what? His shovel and his sword. Now what does that make you think of? What does that make you think of? For me it summons the image of the return of the first exile. With Ezra and Nehemiah. I think so because Jeremy had talked this about so often and taught me about this. And how that the small remnant fought and struggled to rebuild.

It's actually in chapter 4, verse 11. It says in the book of Nehemiah.

Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves in such a way that with one of his hands each labored in his work, and with the other hand he held a weapon.
-Nehemiah 4:11

And Gavriel isn't the only one. I've experienced the two for years. That's how we built this Farm. That's how the state of Israel was built. Just as the nation of Israel fought with one hand and built with the other in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, upon their return after the first destruction. The same is happening today in the very same Judean hills. And while they were building the 2nd Temple, we may not fully know it yet, but we're building the 3rd. Tshuva is happening right now, we're returning and we're returning right now.

And then, on the way back, drove through the nearby village of Ibei HaNachal. Now I'm not going to show this, I'm going to ask Tabatha to cut this out in the final version because my sister got me a little paranoid about it, but our closest neighboring village of Ibei HaNachal, this is what I saw. And I just glanced at it, it took me by surprise. And without knowing even why, it brought tears to my eyes. Look at this.



I don't know, it was just...for a fleeting moment when I first saw that and I pulled over and I took out my phone, I was just knew, by now I know what I have to film, even if I don't know why. I felt like maybe Mashiach may have come. That the fences were being taken down. Taken down by these sweet innocent children. For that brief moment, I think it just flew through my mind that the great shofar had been

blown and peace had been declared throughout all the world. That fences were being taken down and swords were being beaten into plowshares. It was just...that moment was so brief, it was like the blink of an eye. But I really do think that it's a momentary glimpse into the times that are soon to come. You know because that settlement, they overwhelmingly voted to take that fence down. They made a unified decision, not to make decisions based on fear. And based on doubt. And although we aren't there yet, in my heart, I know that the closer the

nation of Israel gets to releasing our fear of man and increasing our fear of God, the closer we get, not only to taking the Jew out of the ghetto, but the ghetto out of the Jew.

And then I arrived home and I was just processing that and then I was told the news. I'm sure you guys have heard this already, knowing this Fellowship. Five red heifers...give me a thumbs up if you've heard this already. Five red heifers, pure and unblemished, unyoked, never been yoked before. Seemingly really kosher, very diligently inspected by the sages of Israel, alive today for the task of purification in the Temple, they arrived in Israel. Five. Five of them! I remember when I was a kid, there was like one in Haifa, in Kfar Chassidim that they found. Was it? Wasn't? And I don't know and that was such a big deal. One! Five!! You know I've heard rumors about such a thing happening, but never did I think that five would be found and actually imported here to Israel.

Here are just a few pictures. There's a lot of pictures, videos, I'm glad I didn't include them because as you see, we're already overtime. This is the plane that they were on. They weren't shipped, they were put on a plane. This is my friend, Josh Wonder with the heifers in the background.



This is a picture of them, themselves. It's unbelievable. This is the first time in 2,000 years such a thing has happened. Red heifers from a Christian farm in Texas, flown to Israel to prepare for the Temple. I feel like history is speeding up. Like it's accelerating. Like the Sabbatical year is ending and a new cycle is beginning. Something even greater is beginning. What I really believe is beginning is the final stretch to geulah, the time of redemption. And yes, I know, Jeremy, I've been saying that for years. But, ok! In the scheme of thousands of years, I'm off just a little bit! Ok, it's not even off, it is! It's just part of the journey, we're coming close.

Jeremy, do you not feel it? Be honest. Be honest. We're here in the Fellowship. Say the words.

Jeremy

The year, this year, feels like it's going to be a very big year. It feels like things are really starting to happen in the world. It feels like this year is going to be a huge year, the year after Shmitta. That's what it feels like.

Ari

I'm glad you're finally coming on board. And you know I thought I was going to stop doing that. I was going to stop doing the redemption thing after last Pesach and this Pesach I was so sure of it. You remember the story. I was going around the Farm, blowing the shofar, but I can't help it. I just feel it coming closer and closer and faster and faster. And so I really have a lot more to

share. But nothing I say could possibly come close to describing what's in store ahead for us then the words of the prophet Yishyahu in this week's Haftarah portion in chapter 60, verses 1 to 22. Now I didn't have time to prepare a slide and there's so much here, I'll just read whatever I read here. So chapter 60, verse 1:

Arise and shine for your light has arrived. And the glory of HaShem has shined upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and dense clouds the kingdoms. But upon you shall shine HaShem. And His glory shall be seen upon you. Nations will go by your light and kings by the brightness of your shine. Lift your eyes about you and see all of them assembled, they come to you. Your sons from afar shall come. And your daughters shall be nurtured alongside royalty. Then you shall see and be radiant, anxious and expansive shall be your heart for the affluence of the West shall be turned over to you and the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

Alright, skip to the end. It goes on more, I really encourage you to read it yourself.

No longer shall violence be heard in your land, nor plunder and breakage in your borders. But you shall call God's salvation your protective walls. And his praise your gateways. You shall no longer need of the sun for the light of day. Nor for the brightness the moon to illuminate for you. Rather HaShem shall be unto you an eternal light. And your God for your glory. Never again shall your sun set, nor shall your moon be withdrawn. For HaShem shall be unto you an eternal light and ended shall be the days of your mourning.

I was just thinking about our friend, Nati, like the day could come any day now. And everything could be healed, even though we say, "How could it possibly be healed?" It can be. There's nothing beyond HaShem.

And your people, they are all righteous. Forever they shall inherit the Land. A branch of my planting, My handiwork for Me to glory in. The smallest shall increase a thousandfold. And the least into a mighty nation. I am HaShem. In it's time, I will hasten it.

In it's time, I will hasten it. We've spoken about those words before, what that even means. Seems to be a contradiction. In its time, it's in its time. But when the time comes, I will hasten it. And my friends, we're in those times, I feel it. The time has arrived and perhaps we're not worthy. But HaShem is hastening it. So hold on tight and let's remember that heading into Rosh Hashana, each and every one of us have a critical role to play. Our sages tell us that in our mind, we should visualize the entire world as on a balance. Exactly 50/50 between good and evil. And our action at this moment is the deciding factor between whether the world will be judged and sealed for life and redemption or God-forbid death and exile.

So as we approach Rosh Hashana, I bless us all that we should use these days to get our thoughts in order, to recognize in our heads, like Jeremy was saying, to recognize in our heads and internalize in our hearts that HaShem's our King. We'll focus on the Father part later, but right now on Rosh Hashana, the focus is not on us, it's on HaShem and His Kingship. Because again, fear of HaShem must, must come before love of HaShem. Otherwise, the love is flawed. It's not durable, it won't last. And what's the fear? What is this fear of HaShem we're supposed to have? What's that fear? Well I'll tell you for me, personally, my fear is not about punishment. Really. It's not about punishment. Right or wrong, my fear of HaShem isn't about getting punished, it's not about the afterlife, I don't think about that at all. My fear of HaShem is fear of losing my relationship with Him. Losing the closeness with Him. Betraying His faith in me. Because that, losing our relationship with HaShem, that is death. Life and death, when we're praying for life and death, it's about far more than about whether your heart is beating and you're physically breathing. We're praying to be sealed in the Book of Life, but I think that life is not really just about all those physiological things. What's real life? It's coming close to HaShem, serving HaShem. That's real life.

And how do we serve HaShem? I don't mind with you guys just diving in because we've talked about this before. So if you've been with us, you know what I mean here. But we serve HaShem by raising the light from the darkness. And the greater and the thicker and the more congealed the darkness, like what Nati's going through right now, the more beautiful and precious and godly that light is that we can elevate from it.

So as we head into Rosh Hashana, let's be grateful for our greatest challenges, let's be grateful for our deepest pain because it's within all of that darkness that our own personal ability lies to put a crown on HaShem's head. By lovingly accepting and recognizing that although our limited intellects may not understand it, HaShem is the King and we will rejoice in His Kingdom. And so may our faith and our trust in HaShem be a living testimony to His Kingship in the world, may all of you and your friends, and your family, and your nations and really all of mankind who have nothing but good will. May they all...may you all be sealed and signed and sealed in the Book of Life and health and happiness and everything good.

Ok, my friends, we have a lot coming up. A lot coming up in the days to come. We have sort of a surprise that we're going to be announcing soon. Unless Jeremy you want to announce it now? Maybe we'll announce it soon. But either way, reach out with your questions and your thoughts and your prayers. Ardelle has been keeping me and us updated with your prayers so you can rest assured that I will be bringing those with me into the High Holy Days. Jeremy will as well, that our families will and we'll be praying for you. Jeremy, do you have any last messages you want to share with the Fellowship before I give my final blessing?

Jeremy

I think that everything that you said is beautiful and I'm really taking it to heart. Just to keep it simple, work on the basics. And we should all be blessed with a new year.

Ari

And so as Aaron the High Priest blessed the nation of Israel, and again, I'm not a descendant of Aaron, but what does the Torah tell us? That we're a nation of priests. And so, it's my greatest privilege to bless all of you.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

May HaShem bless and protect you. May He shine His light and His countenance upon you. And may He give you peace. Amen

Shana tova, my friends. Be in touch, really, reach out.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOc-Wp_us1Y Avinu Malkeinu