

Session 26

Vayetze – From Jacob to Israel – The Path of the Believer

29 November 2020

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ox1z1afjiMI&t=106s>

Shalom, fellowship. It's great to see you. It's so good to see you all. I love coming here before and then seeing all the chats from all over the world that come together. It's just so unbelievable. And so, it's like, behold how good and how pleasant it is when brothers and sisters sit together. Like how true is that?

And so, I want to tell you a funny story about my son, Akiva, to kick off today. It really reminds me of what I want to talk about today. So, you know, before we moved to the farm, we lived in a little village outside of Jerusalem called Nave Danielle. And my brother and sister-in-law were my next-door neighbors. Our kids grew up running and playing in between each other's houses. And at one time my sister-in-law was pregnant and you know month after month we would see her and we would go into her home and she would come into our home. And you know every month she would get bigger and bigger. And finally, the ninth month came and lo and behold she finally had a baby girl. And we found out in the evening. And then Tehila says, listen Jeremy, don't tell the kids. They're never going to go to bed. We'll just tell them the next morning before we send them off to school, and we'll keep the peace for the night.

That sounded like a good idea and so the kids went to bed. The next morning, we're downstairs. Tehila's making breakfast. I'm having a cup of coffee and Akiva, who at that time is three years old comes scampering down the stairs, and by the way, three years old is my favorite age. At three, they're just delicious. You can finally know what they're thinking. They can articulate their thoughts in actual sentences and you can really start to get to know your child and what they think about. I just...three years old is the best. And so, Tehila turns to our three-year-old Akiva, and he's coming down the stairs. And she says, Akiva, the best thing possible happened to the Gimpel family last night. And Akiva stops in his tracks in the middle of the stairs. He's on his way down, you could see the wheels are turning. He's thinking. And after a few moments, his eyes light up and he's like big smiles. Oh...we got a kangaroo? And that's like the cutest answer in the world. It's like you can imagine the dialogue in his mind. Like the best possible has happened to our family. Oh, my goodness, I've been waiting my whole life for this. We got a kangaroo.

And so Tehila had to talk him down and say, well it's not exactly a kangaroo. It's small, it's like a baby, and those are very good, too. You know, for years, that story is with me, and you know how cute Akiva was, and he was just being honest, in his mind. The greatest thing in the world that could possibly happen is that we would get a kangaroo in our home. And what could be more important than that? And so, you know, obviously as parents, you know, it's our job here to raise our kids with values and priorities and teach them about character and integrity, family

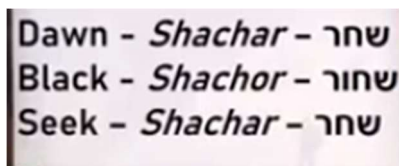
and God and Israel. You know, because if we don't, they won't know. If we don't guide our children, they might spend their whole life chasing kangaroos or cars or who knows what other nonsense. But then when we think about it, you know, all of us are really just grown up three-year-olds. I had my birthday last week. I'm 41 now. I'm just a grown-up three-year old that turned 41. All of us need to be reminded what we're living for, what brings real value into our lives. What will bring real blessing into our lives, because if we let the influences of the bad news networks, or the trends on Netflix or social media run our lives, we are going to miss the mark and end up with kangaroos in our garages.

And so, that's why we're here. After Shabbat, we take the Torah and the blessings of the 7th day and bring it into our week's, focus on our priorities, orient ourselves toward the ultimate good and start off our week spiritually strong with just like a dose of light from the Land of Israel and taking this time once a week absolutely changes the coming week. And we are just so fortunate and grateful for that. And so, let's just take a moment and make our Torah into a prayer.

Hashem, Master of the Universe, look at this fellowship, we have gathered together from all over the world. In just the first few moments we have covered California to Sweden. We're here to invite You into our lives. We want You to guide us through life, inspire our decisions, bless our families, straighten our paths. May today's Torah enter and open our hearts. Bring us closer to who we are meant to be. May the unity of our fellowship be a blessing and an example of what can be achieved in these times. May this new light from Zion shine in each of our lives. May every member and family see with their own eyes, blessings from You, from Israel, as they are a true blessing to us. And the whole world shall say, Amen.

All right. In Israel, that's what's going on right now. The days are getting colder and the nights are getting longer and it's in perfect timing for this transition that we enter into the depths of the story of Jacob, the father of the tribes of Israel. And he is actually the father who represents nighttime. Abraham is known to represent the morning and the morning prayer. Isaac was out in the evening, talking to God when Rivka, his wife appeared. He established the afternoon prayer. And just as he connected Abraham to Jacob, He connects day to night, representing the evening. Jacob always encounters God at night.

Look at the Hebrew here:



Dawn - *Shachar* - שחר
Black - *Shachor* - שחור
Seek - *Shachar* - שחר

Dawn is shachar, black is shachor, and to seek is shachar. And that's just literally the same words. Dark and dawn are the same word in Hebrew. It's like Jacob's encounters with God are at nighttime. And he's the father who experiences the darkness of exile. Who finds God in the struggle. He's not in his father's house, but in the darkness, he looks for guidance and protection. He leaves Israel, he encounters God in his dream on the Temple Mount. And in the night time, on his way home, he battles with an angel of God all through the night until the dawn, transforming himself into Israel. And Jacob teaches all Israel and all of believers in the God of Israel. In the dark, shachar, seek after God. In the shachor, shachar – seek after God. And the dawn is already on the horizon. That's why it's the same word.

In the dark, if you're seeking, you're already there. You've already flipped it. And so, what do we do when the days get darker? We seek a little bit more light, we try to bring a little bit more light. And the sages of Israel teach that one candle dispels a whole lot of darkness from the room. So, like every session at the fellowship, I want to invite Ari Abramowitz to bring some light straight from Judea into our fellowship, because his light is just such a beautiful light. Ari, here you go.

Ari

Shalom my friends. When Jeremy and I came out to these mountains, we didn't know what to call this place that we were establishing. And the more this place blossomed into the magnificent, breathtaking desert oasis into which it's still becoming, the further away we got from knowing what to call it. Is it an organic farm? Yes, but it's far beyond that. Is it a spiritual retreat center? Yes, but it's also far beyond that. Is it a place of prayer and meditation, not only for Jews, but for the entire world? Yes, but it's beyond that as well. No name that we gave it could seem to do justice to really conveying the totality of its purpose, its mission and its holiness. Because the name has inherent meaning to it. The sages of Israel say that when a parent names their child, they are overtaken with the spirit of prophecy whether they know it or not. And the name they bestow upon their child has a prophetic, formative quality to it.

We see it in this week's Torah portion where the tribes are given their names. For example, Leah names each of her sons names that are meaningful to her. Each a type of hopeful prayer regarding her desire for Jacob to full love her like he does Rachel. Reuben, Reuven...Reu ben – see a son. Reu means see. That God should see her pain and now her husband will love her. Shimon, from the l'shmoah, that God will hear that she is unloved. And then Levi. And this is a great example, atah ha'pa'am yilaveh ishi eli, and now my husband will become attached to me because the word, yilaveh, means attached. And she said this because through prophecy, she saw that there would be 12 tribes, so she's now fulfilled her portion, her just portion. Three sons, and now she would feel Jacob's attachment to her as she so desired. But perhaps she didn't realize that the tribe of Levi, which includes the Levites and the Cohanim, the priests, would perform the temple services that effectively served to attach the nation of Israel to God, to bind the Jewish people to Hashem through the Temple service.

Then she gave birth to Judah and she realized that she now has surpassed her allotted amount of sons and she named him Judah because, quote, this time I will give thanks to Hashem. Thanks is from lahodot, Yehuda, Judah. But could she have known that it would be this very quality of giving thanks which in itself is an admission of indebtedness. This quality of admission and taking responsibility, that is what makes Judah and his progeny fitting vehicles to be the kings of Israel. And eventually the Messiah for whom we've been praying. Could Leah have known that? That it would be an intrinsic part of his identity.

Now I say all this to establish the principle of the power of names. They're not random or haphazard, but they're meaningful. On a personal level, I can't help but to feel that my name has been formative in my life journey. Ari Yehuda, which means lion of Judah, or lion of Judea, and now I find myself one of a group of pioneers who are settling the Judean frontier and bringing life to these desolate mountains. I've lived in many places throughout the Land of Israel, and while each was beautiful, it is only in these mountains of Judea that my soul truly felt at home, like I found my place, the place that bring me to life, like nowhere else. Perhaps this was the touch of prophecy that my parents had when they named me, Ari Yehuda.

So in this week's Torah portion, we find that Yaakov in his journey to his uncle's home, he stops to sleep. The verse starts with chapter 20:10. And Yaakov left Beer Sheva and he went towards Charan. And he arrived at "the place" and remained there all night because the sun had set. And he took the stones of "the place" and put them beneath his head. And lay down in "that place." Then Jacob wakes up and he speaks about his experience. And Yaakov woke up from his sleep and he said, surely God is in "this place" and I did not know. And he was afraid. And he said, how awesome is "this place." This is none other than the house of the Almighty. And this is the gates of heaven. Every encounter that Yaakov has here, it's called "the place," out of all things, "the place," including when he returns after his years in the exile. He offers up an offering to Hashem in "the place."

But it wasn't only Yaakov, it was also Avraham and Yitzchak, Abraham and Isaac, in the 22nd chapter of Genesis, in Bereshit – And Avraham woke up early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him, as well as Yitzchak, his son. And broke the wood for the burnt offering and rose up and went to "the place" to which God had shown him. Then, on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw "the place" from afar.

So why is the name of this holy, sacred spot so elusive that it's called "the place?" Why is it merely called "the place," it doesn't really make any sense. It's so bland and generic. I think the reason is because the one spot in the world, the spot from which the sages tell us that the earth from which Adam and Eve were created was collected. The epicenter of earthly matter from which all physical existence in the world is manifested, "the place" where all three of the betei hamikdash, three holy temples stood and will stand. The physical manifestation of God's Presence in the world which bridges the physical and spiritual realms, this spot is so

transcendent that it cannot easily be summarized with a name. For it is from “this place” that God Himself emanates throughout all of the physical universe.

As you may have learned thus far from encountering the Bible through Jewish eyes, in the Hebrew language, in the Bible, God is referred to by many names. He refers to Himself by many names and others refer to Him by many names. The names of God could be a full course in itself. But in short, each of God’s names refers to a different attribute, a different aspect, a different element of the way He manifests and relates to the world. And one of these Names, believe it or not, is the word, makom, which means “the place.” Makom means “the place.”

One of the most noteworthy times that this name is used is when visiting a house of mourning and you comfort the mourners. You say, may “the place” comfort you among the mourners of Zion in Jerusalem. And I believe there’s a reason that God is referred to here, out of all places as hamakom, as “the place.” And it’s to remind the mourner to comfort the mourner, who is feeling severed from their loved one, that within God, Himself, who is the ultimate “place” of the universe, they are both souls that are still existing together. They’ve been temporarily separated in this fleeting life. But within the eternity of Hashem, they’re still together within God, Himself. They’re still connected.

So, when I come here to pray in this holy building at the highest place on our mountain, I look out and I see Jerusalem. I’ll show you, I’ll take you there to see Jerusalem because it’s so critical to understand where we are. We are in these mountains, overlooking Jerusalem at a distance. And so, I walk in to this holy House of Prayer. And I look out the window, facing Jerusalem and since the times of the prophet, Daniel, we’ve been and before we’ve been praying facing Jerusalem. That’s when it’s first mentioned. In the book of Daniel. And I looked through those mountains, I don’t know if you could see it on this camera, here, but you look through and you can see Jerusalem from our mountains in Judea.



And it anchors me and it focuses me. And it reminds me why we're doing all of this out here on the Judean frontier. Because it's so easy in life to get lost in what we are doing, that we can forget why we are doing it. And even if, due to our being mere flesh and blood, we forget for a moment why we're doing all this, we come up to this holy building and we pray and we face Jerusalem and we remember. We are doing this for Hashem, for Yerushalyim, for the Beit hamikdash. Even the name, Yerushalyim conveys this truth. In Hebrew, a word ends in ayim when it has an equal and exact opposite, a pair. A yad is a hand, yadyim is two hands because they're a pair. Ayin is an eye. Anayim is two eyes because they have a pair. If a word is just plural, it ends in im. A book is a sefer and two books are seferyim.

So why does Yerushalyim end in ayim? Because the city itself is a pair. There's Yerushalyim shel mala and Yerushalyim shel mata. The earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem. They're a pair. This is where the spiritual and the physical worlds come together. My dear rabbi friend, Rabbi Judah Mischel quotes his rabbi who answered the question of what to do if you don't know which direction Jerusalem is and in which direction should you pray? He says, you close your eyes and you turn in a circle and you turn in a circle and when your heart starts to beat faster, when your heartbeat accelerates, you know you're facing Jerusalem. You're facing Yerushalyim.

When my wife, Shayna, and I got engaged, I had a certain amount of money set aside to buy her a ring and it wasn't much. But she didn't want anything extravagant. She didn't even want a diamond. She wanted a sapphire. She was drawn to the spiritual qualities of the crystal blue. And that's an entire another discussion. And so, having money left over, I felt moved. I felt like Hashem moved my heart to establish the foundations of our life together in a special way. So, I reserved a helicopter which took us from the runway in Tel Aviv and flew us right over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. And looking down over the Temple, I said to her that if she would

agree to marry me that our life's mission would be to bring the third and final temple from the spiritual realms up in heaven down to earth. And she said, yes. And the rest is history.

Hashem, here we are again, people from over 30 countries around the world who love You, who fear You, who thirst for Your Presence and want nothing more than to serve You. We're coming together as the prophets foresaw and while many of our physical geographical locations are scattered around the world, we're coming together basking in a light that is emanating from Judea and Jerusalem. Please, Hashem, establish Your Presence again for the world to see. And for the world to feel in Jerusalem. Rebuild Your temple in "the place" where Abraham offered up Isaac and where Jacob had his holy dream, seeing You on the throne atop the ladder, reaching heaven, but rooted in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah. Please Hashem, allow us to finally build the third and final Beit HaMikdash, the Holy Temple, the House of Prayer for all Nations, and internalize in our hearts that it's not merely a building, but it's a relationship with You, not only for us, but for all of mankind.

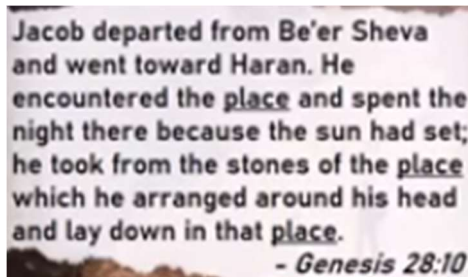
Shalom, my friends, and may it be soon and in our days. Back to you, Jeremy.

Jeremy

Thank you, Ari, absolutely beautiful. Amen. Some people propose at a football game and some people propose in a helicopter over the Temple Mount. Very nice. As always, you make it real, you make it real from the heart, and so thank you. You know, here at the fellowship, we are students of the Bible and there is an ancient Jewish phrase for a Torah scholar. The greatest sages are actually called students. Students of wise ones. Talmide Chachamim. They are the students of the wise. And so, at the fellowship, I take great pride in knowing that all of us are students of the Bible. And there's so many ways to read the Bible, but I think to really probe the depths in our generation, when we study the story of Jacob, we really need to realize that we're reading prophecy encoded in the text of the story. We're reading the story of the people of Israel, embodied into the life of one man. And at the same time, we're reading the story of every believer that is somehow ingeniously captured in the structure of the story recorded in Scripture.

And so, first I want to look at the framing of the story. Jacob leaves his father's house, one way or another, he's not winning at this stage in life. He's not running toward a prize. He's running away with his tail between his legs, escaping from Esav who wants to kill him. He's going into exile, he works for no wages, or in other words, a slave labor for 14 years. And that's somewhat of a prophecy for the generation of Egypt before redemption. They're going to be working at slave wages until they're finally redeemed. It's a prophecy for Israel after the German work camps and concentration camps before the resurrection and redemption of the State of Israel.

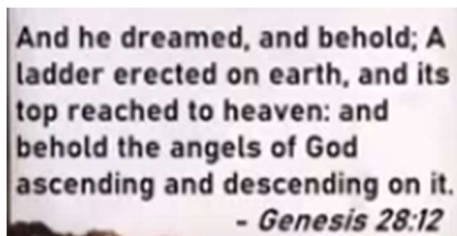
He leaves the Promised Land as Jacob and we know that he returns as Israel. That time in the exile transforms him, grows him, fixes him. It's a new name, it's a new identity that he earns on his journey. But he does something critical before he leaves. He sets his center. He establishes his north star that will guide him back on his journey. If you know where you want to end up in your life, if you really have articulated who you want to be, you can go way off track and eventually redirect yourself back to your destination. Jacob establishes a physical and spiritual destination, a House of God that will be a House of Prayer for the whole world. Look at Genesis 28:10:



Jacob departed from Be'er Sheva and went toward Haran. He encountered the place and spent the night there because the sun had set; he took from the stones of the place which he arranged around his head and lay down in that place.
- Genesis 28:10

Now, just like Ari spoke about out, our attention is being directed toward that place, hamakom, the place here is key throughout the whole paragraph. It says, hamakom, the place, over and over again. Hamakom is one of God's names. He is the place in which we reside. We live within His space, we live within Him. Jacob discovers for the first time in Scripture, that God can be sensed in a particular chosen place. He's not only found in spirit, but in a place, in Mount Moriah, in the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Somehow that place offers a special access to a Divine Presence that we can't have any other place on the planet.

So, Jacob goes on his hero's quest to rectify his mistake, to find his wife, to discover God in his life, to find his way in the world. It starts off at the place where he has his first encounter with God. It happens in one of the most famous dreams in world history – Jacob's ladder. And here's something really important in that story that a lot of people miss. Because there's a dual meaning in Hebrew in the story of the ladder of Jacob. Let's open it up. This is the very next verse, Genesis 28:12:



And he dreamed, and behold; A ladder erected on earth, and its top reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.
- Genesis 28:12

It or maybe him. In Hebrew, the word is bo. Now in English, every single translation in the entire world, Jewish and Christian chose one interpretation. They always say that bo is "it", so

they're saying there are angels that are ascending and descending "it," meaning the ladder. But "bo" in Hebrew doesn't only mean "it." It could also mean "him," meaning angels are going up and down, not the ladder, but they're actually going forth Jacob, himself. The midrash points this out and draws our attention that Jacob, himself, is like a ladder with an ability to rise up to the heavens and descend down to earth, rooted in earth, that his spirit is though connected to the transcendent. In his dream, Jacob realizes that the work of a believer is an inside work. It's an inside game.

So much of our lives is focused on the science of achievement. How do we make things happen? How do we build a successful business? How do we make money? How do we build a good family? But all of those efforts, if you're not upright, you're going to miss the mark. If you're not straight, the ladder can't stand. That's the message that's been given to Jacob. Man, Jacob, you need to straighten yourself out, or angels won't be able to come to you. Jacob, the crooked one, is getting his first message. You need to focus inward, you need to grow, you need to change. You need to become upright. Focus on the outcome to protect the covenant of Abraham from Esav. You know, Jacob breaks with his inner integrity, he breaks his father's trust, he breaks his brother's trust, and now he learns on a journey to rectify the situation, the only way to fix the situation outside, is to fix the situation yourself on the inside.

And this is Jacob's first real encounter with God. You know, until then, he studies, he's in a tent. He lives with Isaac, and that's not a small deal. Rivka saw Isaac, and fell off her camel. I mean, he grew up in the presence of Isaac, a man of spiritual and moral greatness where he radiated holiness. But from the Bible and from history, we know that greatness is not automatically transmitted to the next generation. In fact, it usually isn't the case. It's usually great leaders, their children sometimes are not as great or even close to as great, and very often they're like way off the path. We don't even know Moses's children. They're barely mentioned in the Torah.

But obviously, each son has to discover what God means to him in their own lives. Esav doesn't seem to be that interested in the birthright or anything really beyond the immediate physical world, well, at least until it's too late. And this encounter, in Jerusalem, for Jacob, was like, whoa, this is the first time, God just became a real Presence in his life. And that's understandable. You know, he's leaving his father's house. He grew up relatively wealthy, and all of a sudden, he has no money, no livestock, he's walking into the unknown. You know, they say there's no atheists in foxholes. It's so obvious that in dark times, people turn to God as a source of strength beyond their strength.

But here, with Jacob, it's a little bit more filled with grace. He encounters the "place", he had a dream, it was given to him. He wasn't yet calling out to God. God was calling out to out to him. But here's the kicker. God chose a "place" a specific place for this encounter. And what is that "place?" Let's look at Genesis 28:16:

Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely Hashem is present in this place and I did not know!" And he was struck with awe and said, "How awesome in this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of the Heavens."
- Genesis 28:16

The midrash here says something really beautiful. It says that when Yaakov said, this is the gate of heaven, he's not pointing to the sky. He's pointing to the Land. It's not the sky that's the portal to heaven, like you see in the paintings. But it's the Land itself, the Land of Israel is the gateway to heaven. That place, that physical location in Jerusalem on earth is the key to the gateway of heaven. And Jacob at this point in his life, he's a sincere man, he's called tam. At the very beginning, we're introduced to Jacob as an ish tam, which means he's wholehearted, he's pure. It's important that we're told that at the beginning, because of all of Jacob's shenanigans, you could really see him in the wrong light.

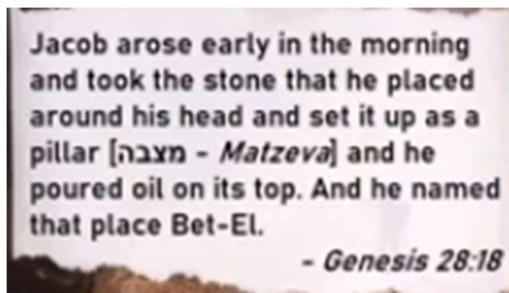
He's good, he has a pure heart, you know, but right now, he's all over the place. He's bent, he's crooked, he's unaligned. Jacob's name actually means crooked and you can see the root of Jacob's name in the book of Jeremiah 17:9:

The heart is *crooked* above all things, And desperately ill; Who can know it?
- Jeremiah 17:9

A crooked heart, hakol halev, literally, it's like, Jacob's name is akov. It literally means to be crooked. And Jacob's life's mission is to straighten himself out. And I think that he understands that from the dream. His struggle is to become upright, to build his character, to build his integrity. That is the true transformation of Israel, and really the true transformation of every believer. It's internal work. Israel is the words, straight with God, yasher El, straight with God. That is what it is to be Israel. You can't get a clearer message than that. Jacob's mission, the father of all the tribes, the father of Israel, the father of every believer. All of us, inside us, we're all born with different strengths and different weaknesses. And our goal is to straighten ourselves out to be a ladder that can bridge the worlds.

And he has this encounter in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, the place that Abraham bound Isaac, it's like all the way back to the beginning, his father and his grandfather's greatest act of faith. And on his way out into the exile, into the unknown, he establishes a matzeva, a pillar, a center,

a place to return. In essence he's establishing almost like coordinates in his GPS system. It's like home, Mount Moriah. Genesis 28:18:



That stone pillar represents eternity. That stone is not going anywhere. That's been there forever, it will be there forever. This is the House of God. We're talking now about a long-term relationship with this place. A vision of the House of God, the place of the Temple, the center of Biblical, spirituality. That's not only for Jacob, but that's going to be for all of Israel, for all believers, for all times. The Hebrew word pillar, matzeva, is the same word that we would use for a tombstone. A rock that will last forever, representing a monument beyond his lifetime. It's almost like to align ourselves in our lives, we need something that's beyond our life to strive towards and Jacob sets this coordinate in Mount Moriah as he leaves.

So, Jacob lives through a lot. He lives through the exile and the treachery of Laban. He struggles with an angel, confronts his brother, Esav, with 400 men. At the end of this transformative journey, seven chapters later, he not only returns to Israel, but he returns back to that same place, to Mount Moriah, to the place of the temple in Jerusalem.

Genesis 35:1 God said to Jacob, arise go to Beth El and dwell there. Make an altar there to God who appeared to you when you fled from Esau your brother. So, Jacob said to his household and all who were with him, discard the alien gods that are in your midst. Cleanse yourself and change your clothes. Then come let us go up to the House of God, to Beit El. I will make an altar to God who answered me in my time of distress and who was with me on the road that I travelled.

So, Jacob's personal transformation and personal relationship with God are never exclusively spiritual or sidelined to the realm of personal introspection and spirituality. They revolve around a Land, a place, a physical location. They revolve around Jerusalem. The covenant of Abraham is connected to the Land of Israel. We know that. The Torah here is showing us, that as a nation, it's not enough to just be spiritual. It's not enough to just pray in a monastery. We are here to restore a Land. We're here to build a kingdom. That kingdom has a capital city. That's the final testimony to the world that God rules the world and not men.

Abraham understood that at the center of his promise was a promised land. But Jacob, the father of Israel now brings a new focus. Jerusalem. And an even more refined focus, the Temple Mount. And if we're not aligned in our lives with Jerusalem, praying toward that place, toward the gateway to heaven and earth, then we're not really aligned with the destiny of Israel. The theater of redemption is the Land of Israel and the center stage is Jerusalem. And you know, although the way of the Bible is a spiritual path, in a personal relationship, there's no way around it. It revolves around a Land, a spiritual center in a physical location. And so, we can never get lost in the heaven and forget to bring it down to earth.

I have a Christian friend that once told me you know, we can't be so heavenly minded that we're no earthly good. And I love that line. You know, that's exactly the point. It's like the connection to the Land, forces Israel to take the loftiest ideas of the spirit and grapple with the harsh realities of the world. And as long as we're severed from that place, from the Temple Mount, then we know that justice has not fully been done and the truth is not fully revealed.

And here, in this fellowship, I want to make this real. I want to take you on a little journey with me to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. We're going to take a small break from Scripture and take a moment and experience reality as it is today. Jacob established that place thousands of years ago and Jacob's name in Israel, is to struggle. And here we are, this happened to me about three years ago. There was a terror attack on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Terrorists went up to the Temple Mount which is the source of peace, brotherhood and prayer and light in the world. And they killed Israeli officers that were at the site. The Israeli government then decided to put metal detectors on the gates to enter into the Temple Mount, to make sure that that would never happen again. And the Muslims in Israel decided to boycott the Temple Mount for several days. And when I realized that this was maybe a first of a lifetime opportunity to ascend the Temple Mount without any fear, without any danger, or being attacked, or being harassed, to actually be able to pray alone for the first time, on the Temple Mount.

This is the story of what happened to me. I want you to see this.

Video

Every news agency in Israel is covering the story that the Temple Mount has now been closed to Jewish worshipers in Jerusalem. I was on the Temple Mount this morning and I thought that the 25th of Tammuz this week was going to be a personal celebration for me, because today I thought was going to be the first time I was going to be able to pray as a free person, as a free Jew in the Land of Israel at our holies site. I ended up getting arrested on the Temple Mount and thrown off. And I've documented the story from the time that I woke up until now. And I want to share this with the world to know what's going on in Judaism's holiest site. What's actually happening in Jerusalem? Every person that cares about justice, that cares about

equality, that cares about freedom and rights, should care about what's happening on the Temple Mount in Israel today.

It's the 25th of Tammuz, July 19th, and this is probably one of the most exciting days that I ever remember. Har Habayit, the Temple Mount is open up for Jews to actually pray there. I've gone up to Har Habayit, I don't know how many times, countless amounts of times. And there were always Arab guards from the Waqf, from Jordan, that wouldn't allow Jews to pray. Imagine that, in our democracy in Israel. Jews couldn't have freedom of religion. And now, for the first time, we're able to go up and pray after the last terror attack on the Temple Mount. Ari's coming to pick me up. We're on our way to the mikvah, and for the first time, we're going to pray as free people in Jerusalem. The heavens are shaking and I'm going to keep you updated, so we can go up to Har Habayit together, because I don't remember a time where such a significant change has happened in the Land of Israel in the last 30 years.

All right, we're in our car on the way to the mikvah on the way to Yerushalyim, and as you can see, the sun is just coming up now over Bethlehem. And this is a historic mikvah, I don't remember how many times I've gone to the mikvah. I think if we actually are able to go up to Har Habayit and pray as free Jews in Jerusalem, I think you're actually supposed to be as a Yom tov, for the rest of your life. Like the 25th of Tammuz, from this day forth is going to be a giant celebration.

Ari

Assuming we're able to go up and to pray freely and call out Hashem as we would want to do because there's a chance that the Israeli government may start being like, no, we're going to institute the law, even if the Waqf isn't there, that's a possibility. And that's why we're going up as soon as we can, because we don't know how long this opportunity will last. I mean, we're in the heart of the three weeks before the destruction of the temple, we're about to enter in to the nine days before the 9th of Av and all of a sudden, for the first time in Jewish history, the Temple Mount is being opened for prayer. We're jumping on the opportunity as soon as possible, and we know a bunch of friends that are coming with us.

Jeremy

So, we just got to the old city and I'm thinking that maybe people need a little bit of background about how all of this happened. There was a terror attack just a few days ago on the Temple Mount and two Druze Israeli police officers were killed. And at that point, Israel obviously said, well, we need to take security measure in order to prevent more terror attacks from happening. And they put up metal detectors outside of the Temple Mount, in order to ensure that no one would bring up weapons to the Temple Mount, our holies site. And now the Arab Waqf is boycotting the Temple Mount. We don't want to go through metal detectors, we want to be able to kill Jews whenever we want to kills Jews, or Druze Israeli police officers whenever we want to kill Israelis.

And the Israeli government, rightfully so, is saying, well, we're putting up metal detectors and if you don't want to come to Har Habayit, don't come to Har Habayit. But now, for the first time, we don't have these Arab guards protecting our lips, trying to guard our hearts from connecting to God. And so, we don't know how long this boycott is going to last, but finally there's a boycott of Israel that we can really get behind. The Waqf should continue to boycott the Temple Mount until Mashiach comes. Amen.

So I just got out of the mikvah behind me. And every time you get out of the mikvah, you feel renewed, feel reborn, you feel ready, feel cleansed. And now, to prepare myself before going up to Har haBayit, we're going to go to the Kotel and davan shacharit. And I'm getting a little bit nervous that maybe the police will not allow to pray. Maybe this is just a fantasy, is this really going to happen? I don't know.

You know, I just finished my davening here at the Kotel, and I know the Kotel is known as the site that is holiest to the Jews, but it's really not true. And although so many prayers have been brought here and so many Jews have poured out their heart before God here, I can't help but feel that this wall somehow represents also a barrier. A barrier to our freedom, a barrier to the next level of Jewish consciousness that we're supposed to achieve. And really, it's a wall, but as I looked up here from where I was standing, it's time for us to go above the wall. It's time for us to go beyond our barriers. It is time for a new era in Jewish history.

Well, I'm walking up to Har Habayit now, and we just got the notice from the police officer that we're still not allowed to pray, even though the Arab Waqf aren't going to be up there. I just can't believe it. I don't know if he's just saying that because that's the rule, or if that's the reality. So we're going up there right now, but I can't help but feel like my heart is literally just broken with the fact that we're not going to be able to daven. I just can't believe it.

You know, I'm just now waiting to go up, going through my WhatsApps. I sent out a message to a bunch of friends saying I'm going up, if you have any prayer requests, let me know. And I got dozens and dozens of prayer requests. And now, the question is, am I going to be able to pray up there or not?

We're going up now and I've never seen this many officers that have been stationed to take this group up. There're literally dozens, and dozens of police officers that are following us around now.

Now just a moment, we're in the middle of the three weeks now. We're coming close to Tisha B'av. Think about how many prayers went up to shamayim, directed at this place. Two thousand years, three times a day, every Jew that was alive, davening four times on Shabbat, millions upon millions of prayers from when we were in Russia, we faced the south, facing Har Habayit. When we were in America, we faced the east, facing Har Habayit. From all around the

world, for millions and millions of prayers. And now, finally the Jewish people, so close to Tisha B'av, are now walking feet away from Har Habayit, feet away from Kodesh hakodashim. We are literally living the prayers of all of our fathers and their fathers and their fathers.

(in Hebrew) Understand that we are the answer. Their prayers were answered through us. The prayers of our fathers have been answered through us. We are the answer. Yes, You have merited to return to Zion, to return to the Holy City. And here we have arrived meters from the Holy of Holies. All of our grandparents and their grandparents. Here, we've arrived. Literally an answer to prayer.

Now, I need to give a little background. We walked around and the Jewish police were so merciful. They really were. They allowed us, not to pray with our lips, but they allowed us to pray with our hearts. And they know what that means. And we know what that means. Because very often, they don't even let us do that. And, we were so close and usually when we go up there, the Arabs purposely yell, allah akbar at us and the Waqf for yelling at us to shush and it's impossible for us to enter into any kind of meditative state, because you see children playing soccer and throwing garbage on our holiest site. And you just don't know what to do. Your heart breaks, you feel the exile so powerfully and for the first time, there was no one up there. There was no one up there, except those that wanted to be there to pray and wanted to be there because it's holy to them.

And, it was just beyond. And I felt so connected to all of the people that were there with me and I felt very connected to the police officers that were there with me. Some people were crying and I just felt like truly all of Israel is one body and all of us are limbs within that body. And yes, the police officers have to do what they have to do, but I have to do what I have to do. And I went up to the police officer and I said, I want you to know, I hope you're not mad at me, and I love you, but I have to do what I have to do. And then, my heart just opened up and as I bowed down, right in front of the Temple Mount, I felt as though a spiritual explosion was let forth from my heart.



And the police officer picked me up and carried me off of Har Habayit. It was one of the highlights of my life because it was a little bit scary, and I knew that it wasn't allowed, but I was just being true to what I know is true. And it's true that the Jewish people should have a right to praise, a free people in the Land of Israel. It's not fair that the Muslims can pray there, but Jews can't. In our own democracy, freedom of religion is not allowed. That's simply not acceptable to me. And at that point, my heart just opened up and I had to do what I had to do. And now, all of Israel is talking about the Temple Mount. And I don't know what you believe, whether you're a Jew or a Christian or an atheist or a Buddhist, but just basic morality. Just the inside of the inside. Why can't Jews pray on the Temple Mount?

I think it's time for us to stand up for what's right, for what's just, for what's true and what's good. And, please God, the Temple Mount will become a House of Prayer for all nations. And not just a House of Prayer for one nation, the nation of Islam, but it will be a House of Prayer for all people to come and worship together.

And so, maybe this was my one step, my one action, my one mitzvah, my one ma'se, to bring the redemption a little closer, to bring peace a little bit closer because we can't live with this injustice forever. (end of Video)

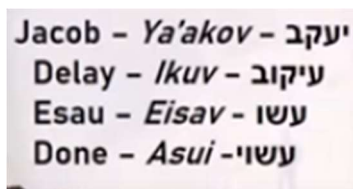
Ok, that was a trip. I haven't watched that video in about three years. The world is upside down still. Jews and Christians are still not free to pray on the Temple Mount. Sometimes now, there are little cracks in the system and there'll be moments where you can kind of get off to the side and pray. Things are changing, but we have to be patient. And it's like we can see the first rays of light, but the sun isn't fully shining in Israel just yet. But one day, when all believers will be able to come to the center of spiritual life, I believe it will be a badge of honor that I was arrested that day. It just goes to show, Scripture tells us that the essence of Israel, the meaning

of the name of Israel is to struggle with man, to struggle with God. Nothing worthwhile comes easy.

You know, and I always wondered, in 1967, in six days, Israel won one of the greatest recorded wars in human history. The Temple Mount was in our hands, why did we give it away? And of course, there's political reasons and strategic reasons, but I think more than anything, Zechariah says that the redemption will come not through power and not through might, but through my Spirit, says the Lord. So He leaves it up to us, we're not going to redeem the Temple Mount with the military. We just keep praying, keep walking. It's not going to be a military victory, but a spiritual victory. And that struggle defines Israel. And in the struggle and challenge, we define ourselves, as we refine ourselves. And the struggle is inward. It's spiritual, it's emotional, it's psychological. It's between you and God, between you and yourself, and at the same time, it's a struggle with man, it's a struggle with governments.

And perhaps on the deepest levels, those two struggles are really one and the same. That's what Jerusalem is here to teach us. Our spiritual destiny and our physical destiny, they're intertwined with each other. There is a Jerusalem below and there's a Jerusalem above. And that meeting place of heaven and earth, that ladder, that happens in Jerusalem. It's like the physical, the spiritual, the transcendent, the imminent, it's the heart of the Biblical mission, to build a Kingdom of God on earth. To bring heaven down to earth, or to elevate the physical into something holy and good. That's why Jacob's dream on Mount Moriah connects heaven and earth.

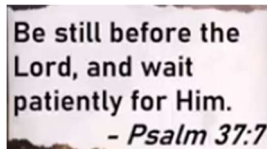
It's like the story of Jacob is our story. It's a story of self-realization, of transformation. Jacob is the father of the 12 tribes of Israel and ultimately becomes the nation of Israel that gives birth to prophets and kings. To King David, to Mashiach, and ultimately transforms the world as we know it. And in his life, Jacob grows, makes mistakes. He even starts off a little bit like curved, a'kov. But he becomes the man he was destined to be. And in his life's journey, he lays out the path for us. Yaakov doesn't only mean curved or crooked, it also comes from the same root word as yikuv, which means delay. And you compare the name of Esav and Yaakov, and clearly, we're meant to learn a deep lesson here. Look at these names in Hebrew.



Jacob - <i>Ya'akov</i> - יעקב
Delay - <i>Ikuv</i> - עיקוב
Esau - <i>Eisav</i> - עשו
Done - <i>Asui</i> - עשוי

Here you have Yaakov, which is Jacob, which literally means, the same root as delay. Esav, his brother, his twin brother literally means already done. It's like done already. He was born, he was hairy, he was already made. And imagine the difference. One is like ready-made and one

is delay. Jacob in his years in Laban's house, discovers the most basic and fundamental traits of what it means to be Israel, the ability to delay, the ability to sacrifice pleasure or gratification now for a greater blessing that will manifest in the future. To be able to so patiently in his life, in order to reap in the future. To work for seven years for his love Rachel, get tricked for another seven years. King David writes in Psalm 37:7:



Be still before the
Lord, and wait
patiently for Him.
- Psalm 37:7

That's like, that is the trait of Mashiach. That's the trait of the King. God has his time and we have our time. And the only way to align with His time is to develop the ability to wait patiently for Him. Yes, we have to do what we have to do, but His time is His time and His time is just right. And while Esav means already done, Yaakov means delay, wait. While Esav sells his future birthright for the immediate bowl of red soup, Yaakov learns the ability to delay pleasure, to delay gratification, to be still before Hashem, to wait patiently for Him, to sow and to wait to sow and not even look to reap.

You know, you need to understand Scripture says that when Esav sold his birthright, from that point on Esav is called Edom, meaning red. He becomes defined by his mistake from that point on. It's represented by fast food. He becomes fast food. That mistake haunts him and continues to haunt him for the rest of his life. The nation that emerges from Esav is called Edom, which looks red because he wanted the red, lentil soup. I mean, some mistakes haunt you for a long time. But through Esav, we're given a message for all times, for every believer. Never sell your future for a moment in the present. In some ways, that is the root of all sin. And over the years, Jacob is able to reflect, he's able to learn, he's able to read the syllables that God sends him, speaking in throughout his life and read them backwards into sentences into life lessons.

And there's no way just to wrap our minds around all of the world at once. And Jacob teaches us, we need the delay. We need to see the long game. We need patience, but more than that, Jacob, how he relates to life, how he relates to God. When he leaves his father's house, something happens beyond the dream. The establishment of the Temple Mount is the eternal capital for Israel. But in that Jacob enters in to a real relationship with the Source of his life, with the Source of Being, he enters into a covenant, a living relationship with God. Look at Genesis 28:20:

"Then Jacob took a vow saying, "If God will be with me, will guard me on this way that I am going; will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear and I return in peace to my father's house, and it will be that Hashem will be a God to me – then this stone which I have set up as a pillar,

shall become a House of God and whatever You will give me, I shall tithe to You.” Genesis 28:10

You know, when I was learning this portion with Tehila and my kids, they were taken aback. They're like, wait a minute. If you do this, then you'll be my God? It sounds a little bit like chutzpah, like right now, sorry God, you're not my God. Only if you do this for me, then I'm going to be your God. And I think that's a fair question. But I don't think that's the right way to read those verses. In my opinion, this is the most important lesson about Biblical faith. Biblical faith is not something you can just declare or decide. It's something you commit to. You can experience faith when you live faith out. You can't inherit it from your father or your mother. You need to take the plunge. You need to reach out yourself.

Until now, Jacob may have believed in God, whatever that means, and I say like whatever that means, because that could mean so many things that he believes in God. It could mean so many things for Jacob, it could mean so many things for us. Something else happens here. It's a map for us. Now for the first time, Jacob is inviting God into his life. He's exclaiming, I want a relationship and he's committing, he's telling God, I want to see You involved in my life. And when I see Your hand guiding my life, then you, Hashem will be my God. I'm going out on my own, I'm ready to commit, show me Your reality in my life. Because that's all I can every really know. That's the only way, Hashem can be my God. I mean, we are billions of years into the great, let there be light moment of the big bang, and I don't think anyone here is closer to understanding God or being able to philosophically or scientifically prove anything to anyone. Trying to understand God and to put Him into a theological box is as useful as an ant trying to understand us as humans.

So, faith is not a matter of arguments or proofs, or speculation. It's a life of love. And in living commitment. In relationship. That's what Jacob says, I'll tithe. It's a commitment, that whatever God gives me, I'm giving back from this point on for the rest of my life. Jacob says, God be with me, guard me on my way, show me the way, guide me in my life. Until you enter into that conversation, faith is abstract, at best, it's a philosophy for life. But in some ways, it's like a marriage. Only when you put that ring on her finger and commit for life, does the journey toward a deep, lifelong relationship begin.

You know, there's some games you don't get to play unless you're in it, and Jacob so close to Abraham, and Isaac, needed to make his own way. So too, in our time. We are called to find our own understanding, to forge our own relationship. And here is an amazing reality that King David teaches us in Psalm 145 – He is close to all who call out to him. He is close to all who call out to Him in truth.

It's like in that moment of jumping in the deep end, there's a moment where you take the plunge. That's what the mikvah represents. That's what the Christian baptism is modeling

itself after. It's the Hebrew mikvah, it's like all right, you are all in the water. You are like all in this now. I'm going forth and trusting you now, God. I can't know until I know You in my life. Until I meet You in the real world, in my world, in a real relationship, You're just a theology or a religion. And in religion, there's dogma, there's familial traditions, there's personal speculation. But at some point, a believer needs to move from speculation to relationship. That's how Jacob starts his life journey to become Israel. From the God of Abraham, He becomes the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Each one, each person had to take their own plunge. Each patriarch experienced something different, expressed his faith in a different way.

You know, over the past few months, three families from this fellowship told me that their businesses were in dire straits because of corona, and the chaos of the world. They didn't know what to do or where to turn and they asked me to pray with them from Israel. And some of them had no idea if things would turn around. Here is something awesome. All three families found a way when there seemed to be no way. And I promised that I would make these answers public and for people to be encouraged. So be encouraged friends. You reach out in faith and God somehow manages. He finds you and is with you where we are. We pray together and something new emerged.

For one member, it was a new way of doing business, for another, clients they never imagined, contacted them out of nowhere. One family was employing about 50 workers and they were about to close up shop. And they had to carry the responsibility of letting go 50 workers into the chaos of covid, but somehow in faith, things turned around and now, out of nowhere, they're busier than they've ever been. God made a way for every single one. The prayers of our fellowship were answered, just like Jacob.

Right as we're learning about the idea of opening ourselves up the way that Jacob opens himself up, because you can't inherit it, not even from Abraham and not even from Isaac. Jacob had to find God in his own life on his own. And as far as I'm concerned, that is Divine intervention. This fellowship is like a spice cart factory. We're just cranking out the spice carts here, and we're just getting started. I mean, the spice carts of life, the prayers answered, you can't have your prayers answered if you don't reach out and pray. You can't have God intervene in your life if you don't invite Him in. That's the message of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

You know, there's a deep teaching in the ancient Jewish Amidah prayer written by Zachariah, Malachi and Chaggai. It says, blessed are you, Hashem, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob. It's like, why did the prophets repeat the word God before each patriarch? They should have just said, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He says, no, he says we pray like this, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Every father, like every believer needs to experience his own relationship with God in his own way, in his own life. We've been learning and praying together now for more than six months. And as we come to

this portion that teaches us, each patriarch needed to establish his own prayer, his own relationship, had to go on his own journey. Jacob puts God to the test, but in reality, he's just making God real in his life. He's saying, I want to see it. I want to feel it. Guide me on my way. Provide for me. Only then can You be my God.

Abraham and Isaac had their lives and their beliefs, but emunah isn't passed through the genes. You can't be born a believer, even if you grew up in a religious home. A lot of my closest friends have children, teenagers, college students. They're seemingly leaving the path of faith. It's not right to see it that way. They have to discover it on their own, just like Jacob. Emunah is lived out, it's a path for every believer. Every believer needs to walk in his or her own way at their own pace in their own direction. It has to be a personal experience like Jacob in the dark, in the uncertainty. He struggles to be upright, but in truth, in calling out, he finds his way. And as Jacob connects to the Land, to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, he aligns with his inner mission to become a ladder upright, begins living in a relationship with God, where angels, in Hebrew, messengers. Messengers in a living relationship can go up and down from heaven to him. His life is a prophetic map for our path in the world. To forge a relationship with the Land of Israel.

And in this fellowship, we are so blessed to be building up the heart of Judea together, like the cutting edge of the return of the Jewish people to the mountains of King David. So deeply connected to Jerusalem. This fellowship is the living expression of the House of Prayer for all nations in the virtual and at the same time, we're building it in the physical. And all of us, learning the Torah, not as literature, but as our guide for living upright in the world. To straighten out our crookedness and make ourselves a ladder that God can send angels down to us.

And in our own way, may we be blessed to find our own way to relate to God, our own relationship with Him. May we see His providence and blessing in our lives and may we give thanks to Him for every day of our life. Every day is a gift, every day is a blessing. So shalom, my dear friends. May we walk in the footsteps of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And may we all dance together on Mount Moriah at a House of Prayer for all nations. Can't wait to hear from you.

Aaronic blessing

Shalom my friends. I'll see you soon.