

Session 123

Shmot – The Book of Shmot

15 January 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS20ee4M68I&t=4s>

Ari

ChatGPT - Please write Fellowship for the portion of Shemot with uplifting and inspiring insights and occasional references to how much I love my daughter, Dvash. Output.

Shalom friends, so good...oooh, I wasn't supposed to read that part out loud! Ha! You guys get it? Are you following the whole ChatGPT thing? I put it out there. You know, I asked ChatGPT, I did not ask ChatGPT to contribute in any way to this Fellowship. But how crazy is this whole thing with ChatGPT? Raise your hands if you know what I'm talking about and you don't think I'm a total lunatic for just making that joke that was obviously going to fail. Jeremy, stop making that face! Anyways, ChatGPT, it's like out of nowhere, this new technology has been released to the world that is making many people, including myself really question not only whether we could be rendered obsolete because it does seem that entire industries are on the chopping block because of this thing. But even deeper and greater questions like what does it even mean to be human? Who can do and make acts of creativity? If this artificial intelligence could be applied to a human looking robot and tweet. To be able in some way to experience pain and pleasure or any other sign of self-awareness. Which is all happening right now! Where are the lines drawn? What defines sentience? What defines life? What is real? And it's happening. In the other direction, as well.

You know, Elon Musk is finalizing the technology that would allow a microchip to be implanted in the brain. I think it's called neuro-link. And this brain implanted chip would allow the blind to see and the deaf to hear, and even the mind to process at a faster rate than we can now. Because as Elon Musk puts it, we have to have a chance to compete against the artificial intelligence we're creating that very well may eclipse us.

So I don't know if you follow this, but this company, OpenAI has released this program called ChatGPT, which is crazy. You can ask it to do pretty much anything. I asked it to write a poem about Judea. And it was touching and it was beautiful and it was written in three seconds. There's a poem that Tehila told it to...I think Jeremy is totally obsolete, because Tehila's new best friend is ChatGPT, from what I can tell. Is this true, Jeremy?

I don't know if Jeremy can hear me. But anyways, she told it to write a poem about me and Dvash and it did it in three seconds. I'm going to read it to you, or just a little bit of it, and then if I feel it's getting weird, I'll stop. This is a poem Tehila had it write about me and Dvash in Judea.

Ari, a rabbi and Judean settler, a father fierce, protective and true.
His daughter, Dvash, a treasure and delight. A precious jewel, his heart beats anew.
He watches her play with poise and with laughter, a toddler's joy a sight to behold.
And with each step she takes, his love grows stronger, his guiding star through the darkest of old.

But his love for her is also a curse. He worries and frets, never at ease.
For in a world filled with danger and harm, his precious, Dvash, he must always please.
He teaches her Torah, the ways of the Land and how to be safe in his watchful sight.
But his over-protectiveness also a burden on Dvash's wings that could never take flight.
For Ari, a rabbi and Judean settler, his love for his daughter both a blessing and plight.
A father's love ever present and pure, but one that in time, Dvash must learn to fight.
So she can grow strong and go her own way.
Live her life on her terms, with her own light and Ari will always be there in her heart, where ever he will forever he will ever reside.

Is that crazy? It's beautiful, if we were to be honest, it's beautiful and ChatGPT wrote that in three seconds. What?

Jeremy
I wrote that!

Ari
Yes, very nice, Jeremy. And I'm telling you, this is just the Beta version we're looking at. You remember Jordan Peterson wrote that international best-seller called, "The 12 Rules for Life?" It's a really good book. Well, he said that he went to ChatGPT and asked it to write the 13th Rule in his voice and style, and he said that what ChatGPT threw at him in a number of seconds was so good that he isn't sure that he wasn't sure if he would be able to tell whether he himself wrote it or didn't write it.

So what's going on? Now, I'm not sure, but it definitely feels to me that it isn't a coincidence that this intelligence, this technology, I don't even know what to call it. It doesn't seem like it's a coincidence that it's being revealed to the world now. And while I'm still trying to fit the pieces together, it does feel that this technology of artificial intelligence is in some way, one of the final innovations in the world before the coming of Mashiach. Who else is thinking about this in terms of Mashiach and redemption? Raise your hands. Ok, so I'm not alone. I'm not alone. It's almost as if the human mind is being prepared to grasp something that we couldn't quite get before this. That we had to actually see it. It's almost like...you remember that exponential leap with radio waves and cellphone? That you could be holding a cellphone and jumping through a hula-hoop, no strings and no wires. If the other person's voice is being transmitted at the speed of light around the planet. It used to be that people would say, "I only believe what I can see. If I can see it, I can believe it." And then all of a sudden, there's this

whole world of X-ray and microwaves and technology that reveal the human eye can only see a small fraction of what's really there. Perhaps, it's preparing the human mind to grasp that what we don't see, is perhaps even more real than that which we do see, in this world of increasing illusion and lies and dishonesty.

Anyways, with this technology, it's almost as if mankind is on the verge of actually creating some type of self-perpetuating intelligence that could increasingly display qualities that could definitely appear to be conscious and aware. That it could possibly develop its own interests and its own will or worse, it could be programmed much more realistically. It could be programmed to have nefarious goals that would be at odds with those of certain people, or even humanity itself. I know this sounds like a plot to Terminator 2, but unfortunately, I think we all see that this may really be more science than science-fiction.

Anyways, many have pointed out teachings from the kabbala that predicted this explosion of knowledge preceding Mashiach. Right before Mashiach comes. It's linked back to the Zohar, which references the flood from Noach. Here's a quote. It says:

The Torah relates:⁷ "In the six hundredth year of Noach's life... all the wellsprings of the awesome depths of the earth burst forth and the portals of heaven opened." The Zohar comments⁸ in connection with that verse:

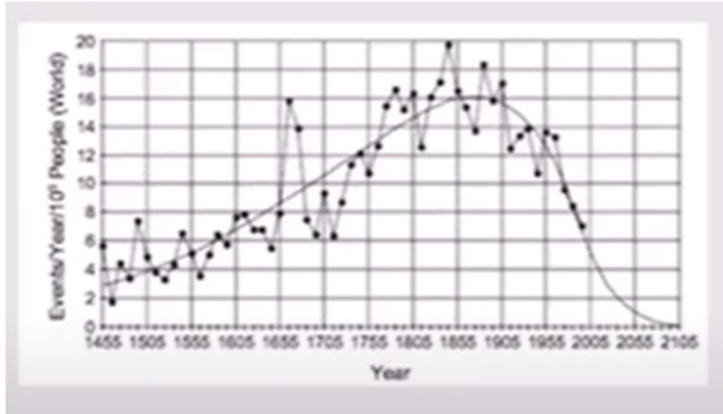
In the six hundredth year of the sixth millennium, the floodgates of supernal wisdom will open and the wellsprings of lower wisdom will burst forth, to prepare the world to enter the seventh millennium.⁹

To explain the meaning of the terms "the floodgates of supernal wisdom" and "the wellsprings of lower wisdom" (that are alluded to in the phrases¹⁰ "the wellsprings of the awesome depths of the earth burst forth" (i.e., "the wellsprings of lower wisdom") and "the portals of heaven opened" (i.e., "the floodgates of supernal wisdom")): "Supernal wisdom" refers to

בשייכות צום פסוק' "בשנת שש מאות שנה לחיי נח וגו' נבקעו כל מעיינות תהום רבה (וארובות השמים נפתחו)", שטייט אין זרה: "ובשית מאה שנתן לשתיתאה יתפתחון תרעי דחכמתא לעילא ומבועי דחכמתא לתתא ויתתקן עלמא לאעלא בשביעאה כו" - אז אין די יארן פון שש מאות שנה פונעם אלף הששי וועלן זיך עפענען די שערי החכמה למעלה און די מעיינות החכמה למטה און די וועלט וועט נתתקן ווערן אויף צו קענען אריינקומען אין דעם אלף השביעי.

דער פירוש פון די צוויי ענינים "תרעי דחכמתא לעילא, ומבועי דחכמתא לתתא" [וועלכע זיינען מרומז אין פסוק הנ"ל: "נבקעו כל מעיינות תהום רבה (מבועי דחכמתא לתתא) וארובות השמים נפתחו"] (הרמב"ם, שו"ת אורח חיים סי' קנ"ב).

But anyways, we're talking about that supernal wisdom from above, that's Torah truth, spirituality. And lower wisdom, what's that? Wisdom from this earth, from this realm, science, math, technology. Well Rabbi Tzvi Freeman from Chabad, points out that the six hundredth year of the 6th millennium, comes out to the Hebrew year, 5600. Which was the secular year of 1840. I mean it's not just Rabbi Freeman that pointed this out. This is like well-known.



He brought this chart. And I don't know where he got this chart from by the way. Maybe he got it from ChatGPT. But it shows the progress of human discovery and innovation measured against population growth. And what do you see but, 1840 is the apex, the pinnacle of this flood of knowledge and information into the world, to the degree in which it's

nearly the sum total of all human knowledge, is contained in this miserable, little piece of hardware in my hand right now that we all struggle with so much.

So that is the technology, right? The wellsprings of knowledge being released from below. And what's that being released from above? Well if you look at the year 1840, that's really when Chassidut, right? Which is known as the heart of the Torah, the soul of the Torah, the internalization and the deeper elements of the Torah, started being released and proliferated to the entire world. You know, a lot of that by the way, without calling it or labeling it, a lot of that is what we learn in this Fellowship. Whether we're aware of it or not, it comes from Chassidut. The Ba'al Shem Tov was born in 1740. But the teachings started to really proliferate and spread throughout the world much closer to 1840. Right? I can't help but to think that what we're doing in this Fellowship, by the way, in some way...maybe in a small way, very small way is part of this movement of the spiritual wellsprings flooding through the world...THROUGH the technology of the lower wellsprings flooding into the world. It's like the merger of both of them in some way, if that makes any sense.

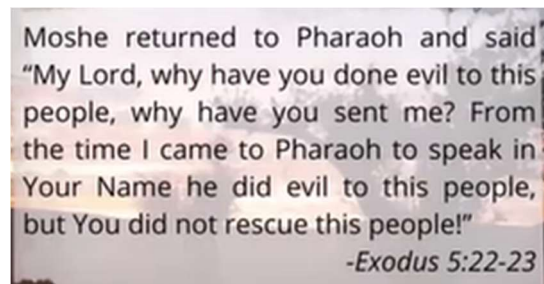
Anyways, much like the times of the Tower of Babel when mankind tried to defeat God, Himself by the use of building technology? It seems like there's a mad race right now to do the same. Just on a different front, by employing this technology of artificial intelligence, in pursuit of creating a living, sentience being. In pursuit of, in so many words, of becoming God. But as we have learned, HaShem doesn't want us to be God-like, but He wants us to be godly. We are not here to seek power and control. That's sort of what led to the eating of the fruit from the Tree. That is HaShem's domain. We are here to emulate HaShem's attributes of love and kindness and compassion. HaShem doesn't want us to seek to replace Him. But to come close to Him and partner with Him in a relationship with Him. To channel His love and His light and His compassion into the world.

And we see in these portions that what happens to man when he thinks he is God. In a very real way, that's what the entire chapter of our history in the cauldron of Egyptian slavery is about. Right? HaShem's methodical and calculating humbling of the arrogance. Humbling of the arrogant - plague by plague, HaShem deconstructs and disabuses Pharaoh and the entire

Egyptian society and theology of the ridiculous beliefs of Pharaoh with his belief that he, himself is a god. So thoroughly is Pharaoh humbled that in the end, he's really just left this empty and broken man. But a humbled man, which is quite an asset.

And now I see that other people are taking pictures of the screen, that's pretty cool. Anyways, so as mankind approaches this pinnacle level of becoming god-like to the degree where we don't even know what to expect, that is when the greatest revelation of light and truth comes. You know, and by the way, whether I'm right or wrong about all the details of this analysis, I think we all feel like momentum is definitely building. Like something is happening here. Things are starting to shape on so many different levels. And man is advancing, technology out of nothingness, while at the same time, we are coming closer to global nuclear war than any of us can ever remember. What did Einstein say? He says something like, "I don't know what WWII will look like, but one thing I can tell you is that WWIV will be fought with sticks and stones." Right? It feels like we're getting there. We're on the verge of huge, unimaginable breakthroughs that will either bring peace and plenty and security to mankind, or total destruction and nuclear annihilation. And I think we can see the potential and the capacity to go both ways. Who knows how many months we are away from being able to just write, ChatGPT, please give us the equation for sustainable fusion, so that all of mankind is unlimited safe, clean and sustainable energy. That could happen. Or ChatGPT, go ahead and launch the nukes. That could happen too.

So if there's ever a time that we need Mashiach, I think it would be now. And that is actually when Mashiach tends to come. Mashiach comes because we see as a rule of nature and a rule throughout history. The winter is coldest right before the end of the winter, the night is darkest right before dawn. When something is about to be defeated, it fights back with its greatest strength. And we see this in our portion, right? Moshe goes to Pharaoh to redeem the nation and free them from slavery and what happened instead? Pharaoh increases their labor! They need to collect their own straw. Their suffering is greater than ever before. And Moshe says to Pharaoh - Moshe returns to HaShem, not to Pharaoh, I wrote that wrong.



And what occurred immediately after this increase in persecution and suffering and darkness? What happened? Immediately after, this amplification of the darkness, the light of redemption begins to shine. NOW you will see what I will do to Egypt.

Anyways, before I go on, allow me to introduce the REAL LIGHT of this Fellowship, the dynamic duo, Jeremy and Tehila. And let us start with Tehila:

Tehila

Hi everyone. So there's something that really struck me in this past Torah portion of Shemot, which was the negotiation between Moshe and HaShem regarding Moshe going on his mission to go speak to Pharaoh and save the Israelites. So I think it touches on something very real psychologically. There's this kind of pushback and resistance and it starts on these very, sort of lofty premises, and you know he says, "Well there going to want to know Your Name." And then HaShem says, "Well, here's a name You're going to tell them." And then Moshe says, "Well, wait, wait, wait. Maybe they're not going to believe me." So HaShem says, "Ok, here are some signs, you know that you can show them." And in between the lines you may hear HaShem kind of pre-empting a possible concern about their financial welfare. Seemingly out of nowhere HaShem says, "Well you know, don't worry. They're also going to have a lot of gifts from the Egyptians. And they're going to be going to a Land of milk and honey." Like maybe HaShem is saying to him, "If you're worried that they're going to go into the desert and just waste away, don't worry about that either."

So what's so interesting is that after all these initial sort of objections, Moshe really cuts to the chase. And he says, "HaShem, I'm not a man of words." He says, "I'm not a man of words neither from yesterday or from the day before yesterday, nor from the time you have spoken to Your servant. For I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue." Now that's interesting. From the time you have spoken to your servant...we're in the conversation right now. What is he even saying there? I think here it's sort of like, those babushka gals where you open up one and you open up another one until you finally get to the middle one. So it's like Moshe's starting with these different layers. First it's like theological. It's a philosophical problem. What is God? What is God's Name? There's a philosophical problem. Then he gets to more practical problem. What if the people don't believe me? It's almost like a national issue. This is about the nation. How am I going to get public support for this? But then when you open it up, what's layered inside of the inside is this fear that basically says, "I'm just not good enough."

And when I'm reading that, it really hits home. Because at least this is my experience. Like I have a lot of excuses in my mind when, you know, I have to face something that I know I should be doing or I feel called to be doing. I could philosophize, you know, make excuses like, you know, saying, "Who even knows if it's the right thing? Who even knows what HaShem wants?" And then I can make practical excuses like, "How can I find time? I have kids, I have work, yadayada." But deep down, I know that inside, what's often holding me back is this feeling like, "Am I even worthy? Am I even good enough?" And for those of us who are parents, this comes up all the time, too, with our children. Like, how do you help a child that's afraid of failing?

So you have to read HaShem's answer really carefully and see how He's going to address this because I think He can model for us, the faith-based response to this kind of challenge. Now, how is HaShem going to address this? One way HaShem could address this could be to sort of continue in the pattern of the answers given to Moshe's other concerns. Moshe said, "They're

not going to believe me. So HaShem says, "Here's a miracle, here's a snake. Here's a miraculous leprosy on your arm and it will be cured." Cool, that's cool, right? So if that's the pattern, what would we expect HaShem to say? HaShem could have just said, "Oh, yeah. That little talking problem? Magic stick...poof, it's cured. Your mouth is cured, you're a great speaker now." It's not out of HaShem's reach and you can kind of hear that maybe Moshe is even expecting that. Because Moshe says, "I'm not a good speaker from yesterday, from the day before yesterday, or from the time You spoke to me." But You're speaking to me now. I'm thinking that maybe if I'm speaking to HaShem, HaShem is going to heal me.

It happens to us so often with your kids. When you see your kid having a problem, you want to make it go away. You know you could fix this, you could just fix it up. But you know if you do that, you're not going to let them grow. So that's the one way that HaShem doesn't take. Now the other way, now this will sound familiar for those of us who grew up in the self-esteem, modern psychology kind of environment. This problem sounds really obvious and the solution sounds really obvious. What else should HaShem do? HaShem should build his self-esteem, right? Oh, you're stuttering, no big deal. No one notices that little thing. You are a great speaker, believe in yourself, I believe in you. You can do it, right? That's what modern psychologists would tell us to do as parents. Praise your children, build their self-esteem, you're amazing, you're wonderful, you're perfect.

But HaShem doesn't go in either of those directions. What does HaShem actually say? It says the Lord said to him, "Who gives man a mouth? Who makes one dumb or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I the Lord?" So HaShem says...HaShem could have said, "You're perfect the way you are." But He doesn't. He says, "Who makes someone blind? Who gives people their shortcomings? I don't only give people talents, I give them shortcomings and I have a reason for that."

But then He says now in verse 12, "So now go. I will be with your mouth and I will instruct you what you shall speak."

For me, this is such a powerful lesson. Like He's saying, "I'm not going to cure your problem, and I'm not going to tell you that your problem is not a problem, you're so talented, you're so amazing, I'm sure that you're fine. I'm going to tell you that you have a problem. Not only do you have a problem, but I'm the Creator of every person's problems! I put your talents there and I put your shortcomings there. But when I choose you for a mission, I'm going to be with you and your success or failure is going to have nothing to do with you and everything to do with Me being with you and your faith in Me."

That is what Hashem is guiding us to. And this really hit home for me as like the emunah kind of faith response to that feeling that I struggle with and I think a lot of us struggle with. And it's connected to our life on the Farm and this Fellowship because you know sometimes, I'll take a

moment when things sort of quiet enough to take a moment. And I pause and I look at the crazy living room, I look at this remarkable Farm, and meeting the most amazing people from all around the world and who even gets to do that? And people turn to us, of all people, as a source of Torah and guidance and we have these amazing opportunities to travel and teach. As those of you guys who have met us on the road, or in Israel know, we're just like the most regular people, we have a messy house, we're running around doing car-pools and homework and squabbling about stupid things and forgetting to pay silly bills. And how in the world did we end up in this position? There are rabbis that are a million times smarter than us to be teaching Torah. There are farmers that are a million times more skilled and experienced than us at trying to revive the Land. And yet, here we are. For the simple reason, we couldn't escape. And we might have tried, but we could not escape the feeling of being called to this journey and this mission.

And so HaShem's words here are like echoing in my mind and strengthening because He's saying, "You think I chose you without knowing your shortcomings? I know them better than anyone. Who makes one deaf or one seeing or one blind? I made you dumb, Tehila, and I still want you and I will be with your mouth." So the solution is not in trying to escape the shortcomings. You know, magically hope to fix them or to whitewash them and make ourselves feel better about them. But the simple faith that HaShem reminds us here in verse 12 when He says, "I will be in your mouth and I will instruct you what to speak." And perhaps that's the lesson we need to impart, not only to ourselves, but to our children as well. That their success and failure turns not on with what their born with, but on knowing that when HaShem puts them in a position, you're not there for no reason. He does it, knowing your strengths and knowing your weaknesses. And through your faith, that you are where you're supposed to be. And by being committed to following HaShem's instruction, that is the key to finding success and blessing on whatever journey you find yourself on.

So, that gave me some strength this week and I hope it resonates with you guys, too. I hope everybody has a great week. Bye, guys.

Ari

That was very beautiful. And strengthening to me. And to hear Tehila refer to herself as a mere mortal...ok, I mean if that was true for Tehila, I think Jeremy and I, who are actually regular people, really that could resonate. Actually, for many years now since Jeremy and I have been on this journey. You know, Tehila's teaching there just brought up a quote from Rabbi Dessler that I've referred to many times when I feel this sort of inadequacy.

So he says, "In wartime, promising candidates are taken from the ranks of ordinary soldiers. And by prodigious expenditure and skilled instruction, they're turned into officers in a fraction of the time normally required. So, too, in times such as ours when capable men are scarce. Anyone who shows willingness to tackle a vital problem has Divine assistance heaped upon

them. He turns the incapable into successful men. Not because they deserve it, but because the world needs them.”

And to me, that always spoke to me and strengthened me because I very much considered myself an incapable man and I feel like HaShem has definitely blessed us. And when I say “us,” I mean me and Jeremy, my commander, my best friend. Eager to hear what you have to say, Jeremy. Try to follow Tehila. Good luck.

Jeremy

It’s hard to follow Tehila. That was really, first just like a beautiful analysis of understanding the story. Kind of hearing the layers of Moshe Rabbenu. She’s just so insightful, she’s just like amazing. So I’m going to take it in another direction. But I think it’s just very relevant right now. Because the more and more we sort of progress forward in the world, it seems as though the Torah is giving us kind of blueprints that we have to look back at. And we have to look at those blueprints and study them because it’s eternal blueprints for all time.

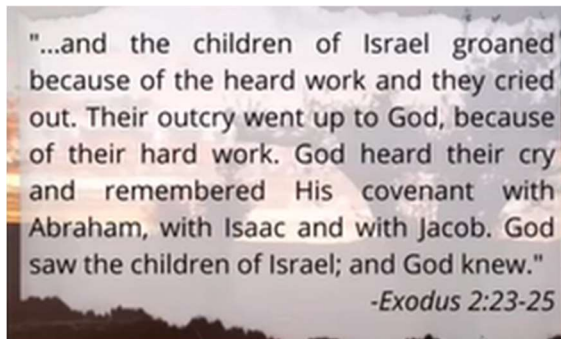
And so, when we look at the story of Exodus, and we see the story of the people of Israel that are in Egypt. There’s a backdrop to that story. And it sort of like falls beneath the cracks. But when Joseph brought his family down to Egypt, that first generation, they were royalty. They were living like friends of the King. I don’t know who to like compare it to, but like Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump. They were like among the royalty. They were connected to power and wealth and money and honor. And all of the family then was like immersed in success.

And we also know that according to the Midrash, that as time went on, eventually the people of Israel ended up in the 49 Gates of Impurity. If they would have entered into the 50th Gate, they would not have been able to be redeemed. And at the 49th Gate, they were so fully assimilated into Egyptian culture, into Egyptian idolatry, into Egyptian immorality, they just lost their identity almost entirely according to the Midrash. They just kept their names, their names remained kind of Jewish, their clothing remained kind of Jewish. It was kind of like bagels and lochs Judaism. But for the most part, they were just fully assimilated into at that time, it seemed like the WOKE society. I mean the pyramids and the technologies that the Egyptians had was so attractive, they were the most powerful empire, the most sophisticated society and Israel was like among them.

And when you look at what happens, this story has many layers, but when you read it, you have to sort of recognize that there are multiple layers. And when you read the verses, if you read it on a childish level, they almost don’t make sense. Look at the end of chapter 2 in the book of Exodus and let’s read these verses together. You know I spent Shabbat in Shirat David. And Rav Shlomo Katz gave a little teaching on this. And I’m going to take his teaching and expound upon it. But it was one of the most beautiful Shabbats that I’ve ever spent. Shirat David is the most beautiful shuls in the world and that community is...if you’re thinking of making aliyah and

you want to move to Israel, you should really look into moving to Efrat and joining that shul. Because it was the most inspiring Shabbat that I've ever attended. It was so unbelievable. But look at what it says here in Exodus in the 2nd chapter. Can we get it up on the screen please? If we can't get it up on the screen, I'm just going to read it off. But I hope we can get it up on the screen. So here's what it says:

"Now it happened in the process at that time, the King of Egypt died (so the King that was friends with Israel, he passed away)



Now keep that screen up there for a little bit. In Hebrew, there's actually three different words that are used here. The first one is they groaned. You groan like if you're doing heavy weights... ..ahh...that's groaning, that's like oh, they're like working hard and they're groaning.

But then, there's a cry and you're crying out. It's a different level. And then it says, when their outcry went up to God, that's an outcry for salvation. And so, what happens here? The people of Israel were high society. They were living the good life. And then, all of a sudden, they were sort of like duped in and turned into slaves. Slaves for this empire that they were once the saviors of. And at that time though, you know when life is good, everyone has a tendency to forget how good life is. Everyone has a tendency to forget to be grateful. And at that time, they're like just groaning. They're just like...they had already forgotten God. And now they're just kind of like upset in the work that they're doing. And only later, when their outcry went up to God, it's like they're calling out for salvation. All of a sudden now they're called out to God.

But here's like...what, God forgot them and then He remembered them? And it was like, what, He forgot? But that's obviously not true. Because in the very next chapter, we already see them like, well they're calling out to God. And then the very next chapter, in chapter 3, God appears to Moses in the burning bush. But God had already sent Moses to be born into the world, saved by the daughter of Pharaoh, before the people of Israel were groaning or crying out to God. It's not like God forgot them. On the contrary. So what is all of that language there, where all of a sudden they're calling out to God and then God remembers them? Why? What does that mean?

So I want to answer on two levels. The first answer is the classic answer. That the Torah speaks in the language of people. So when it says that God saved Israel with an outstretched arm, it's not that God actually had an outstretched arm and saved them, but that's kind of the way the people speak, so that's why the Torah speaks in the language of the people. And so also here,

it's not that God forgot and God remembered. But it was as if God forgot, and God remembered so He can sort of relate to them.

But on a deeper teaching something else happened here. That when it said that they called out and they cried out to God, it doesn't say that they cried out and that God heard their cry. So when they were crying out for the first time, they themselves made a turn. A turn back to God. There was many, many years where the people of Israel had totally forgotten. They didn't have the Torah. Do you know how easy it is to forget God when there's no Torah? You're just a good person? Good luck. Good luck with standing university indoctrination and Hollywood and Netflix where the only thing that's keeping you good is the idea of being a good person. You can be manipulated and convinced in so many different ways. And the people of Israel, that's exactly what happened. They had Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But they didn't have a law, they didn't have a covenant that they had to keep. They just had an idea of being moral, of being righteous, being good, whatever that even meant.

And so they were lost into Egyptian culture, so much so that even in the beginning, they're just sort of groaning in their hard work. But when they finally cry out, it's not that God remembers them, but that crying out, they remembered that God is IN them. And that remembrance isn't that God remembered, but the deeper side of that story is that the God inside of them was remembered. And in that moment, immediately redemption started to unfold. And so, so many times in our lives, we're just sort of walking around life, kind of doing our thing. And then, all of a sudden, side-swiped, on a Tuesday afternoon with a disaster. And all of a sudden, we're calling out to God. We're asking for prayer requests. But what happened on that Tuesday afternoon before that? Why weren't we then...it's like that is the blueprint. That is the teaching. Never wake up and forget to thank God for all of your blessings. Every day, don't ever groan. Always call out.

And so what happened here is not that God forgot, then He remembered. The people of Israel forgot and the people of Israel remembered that God lives in them. And as soon as they awoken their neshamah, they awoken the godliness within them, immediately that triggered the godliness from above to then proceed toward full redemption. And so, may we all remember that at every stage of our lives, that HaShem has already set those. He's already been born, he's already been saved, he's already grown up in Pharaoh's house. And it took the Israelites way later to finally wake up but God is in charge of everything – the weaknesses and the strengths, just like what Tehila said. And so, that happens on our personal lives, it happens on our national lives, on our family lives, and the lives of our loved ones around us. And the Torah here is teaching us, never forget. Try to constantly be singing the praises of God. That we should always hear our call crying out to God. Don't wait for something to trigger our crying out to God. But that we should just be living in a constant dialogue with God. We should be constantly singing our song. And that all of us should be blessed to read those words and

realize that those words of the Torah are a spiritual template of how to live life. And that we should all be blessed to live life singing to God.

Ari

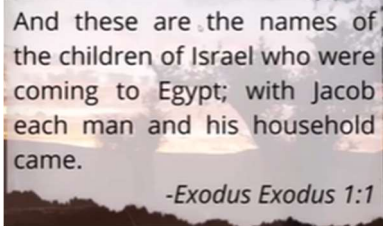
Ok, Amen, yeah, so Jeremy, sort of the way I picture what you're saying, it's almost like a Cohen. A priest in Israel. Today they're not allowed to forgo the honor that is given to a Cohen because it's not about them personally, it's about something greater than that. It's about their position. What you're saying almost made me think that the nation of Israel remembered...wait, there's a certain level of dignity. Like we can see HaShem in each other, but by deduction, we also have to realize that others should see HaShem in us, that HaShem is truly in us and that we can't be treated in any way. That it is a desecration of HaShem's Name for us to be treated in that way. Not just about us personally, but about HaShem. It's like the relationship started to grow. That's really like a beautiful teaching. Did I get that right or am I missing what you're saying?

Jeremy

Well I think you actually added another dimension to what I was saying, but it even made it more beautiful. But I think you're absolutely right, meaning what's being taught here in some ways is that we live in a relationship with God and it's a little bit of a dance. And you know what? Sometimes you can send your partner across the room and they're kind of doing their own thing for a while. That happens sometimes in life. And God is kind of telling us, "Don't stay on the other side of the room too long. Keep your hand close to My Hand. I really want to walk with you, holding hands." And as soon as we reached out, immediately the Hand was there to grab it. But what happened to the people of Israel, it's not that God forgot them and then He remembered. But it's that the people of Israel forgot and then they remembered. I think that was like the deeper side of the story.

Ari

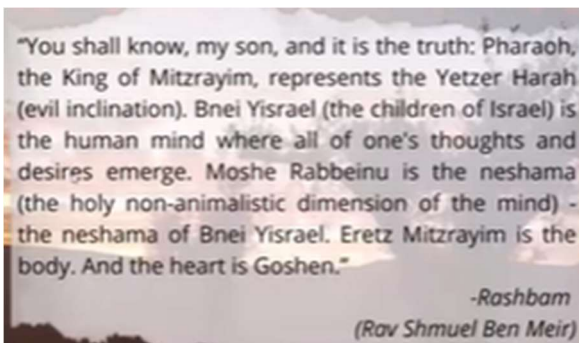
Beautiful, beautiful. Anyways, so let's dive in, right? Let's dive into the Torah portion. I'm going to see how far we get, I'm still trying to figure out how to do this, to dive in sort of in order and get past the first chapter. But here we are, let's start at the very beginning. By the way, if there's any desire to ask questions or to speak up, we're definitely open to a Fellowship Connection today, if anyone has the desire. Maximum invitation, minimum pressure. But I hope Jeremy is able to stay on and Tabitha as well. I know that she just lost electricity and she's on a power backup thing happening right now. But anyways, let's jump in. Chapter one, verse 1:



And these are the names of the children of Israel who were coming to Egypt; with Jacob each man and his household came.
-Exodus Exodus 1:1

Now what struck me in my initial reading here was the use of the word bayim (בָּיִם), coming to Egypt. It says the word “coming” in present tense. Not bayu, as we would think if it’s a history book. It says it in present tense as if the children of Israel are coming into Mitzryim, into Egypt, right now. Perhaps meaning that in each generation, as we say in the Passover of God, we have someone like Pharaoh and some place like Egypt that rises up to annihilate us and to wipe us out. And in each generation, we are saved.

And while that’s true on a national level, it’s also true on a personal level. Right? Because if we really are Yisrael, not just genealogical, but also on a spiritual level if we’re Yisrael. Meaning if we’re really engaged in a struggle and a relationship with God as our primary experience of understanding this world, then we’re constantly finding ourselves struggling in different Egypts, and in different places of slavery. Our own places of constraints. And then we have our moments of Divine redemption. Where we’re able to look back at the enslavement from which we were redeemed and see it for what it was. See it as a furnace of growth and expansion. Without which it would not have been possible to become who we needed to be. You see this happens on the most microcosmic level as well. The Rashbam writes in a letter to his son, Rav Avraham. He says:



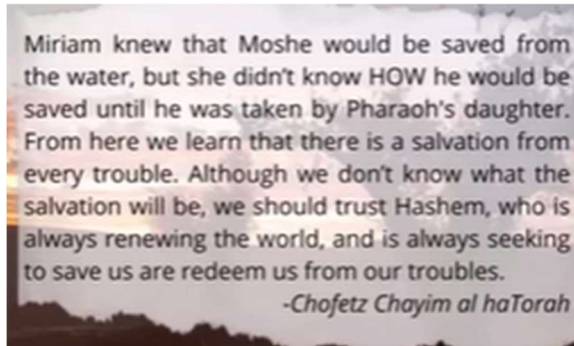
“You shall know, my son, and it is the truth: Pharaoh, the King of Mitzrayim, represents the Yetzer Harah (evil inclination). Bnei Yisrael (the children of Israel) is the human mind where all of one’s thoughts and desires emerge. Moshe Rabbeinu is the neshama (the holy non-animalistic dimension of the mind) - the neshama of Bnei Yisrael. Eretz Mitzrayim is the body. And the heart is Goshen.”
-Rashbam
(Rav Shmuel Ben Meir)

That’s what the Rashbam said in the letter to his son, Rav Shmuel Ben Meir. Now I know that that’s complicated. We don’t need to really dive into that too much. Really digesting this would take quite a bit of time and reflection and I don’t want to get too lost on that right now. Although I did really think about it a lot and it definitely does seem true. It’s just...it’s a challenge. A lot of the things I share here, I want to say this because it’s really a challenge. Because in Western thinking, things tend to be more linear and binary. You know, one or the other. Whereas in Torah thought, things can have simultaneously many different dimensions of truth. Coexisting truth at the same time. And while the Egyptian slavery is true on a historic and macro level, that is true. All of that is true on the simplest level. It’s also true within each and every one of us on our personal wars of perception in our journeys through this world.

Anyways, the point is that we’re all bayim. Bayim, that’s why it says it in present. Because we’re all entering Egypt. And part of the Egypts that we endure is that we simply cannot fathom a way that it will ever end. They say that about depression, that one of the signs of depression is that it just feels like this will never end. And that’s part of what the Egypt is. That

the Jewish people could not fathom. They could not wrap their minds around how they would ever, EVER be extricated from this slavery. Our minds can't wrap themselves around a scenario that could possibly extricate us from this horrible situation that we find ourselves in. Whatever Egypt we're in right now. And that's an intrinsic part of the very nature of the slavery of Egypt. If we could see our way out of it, while we were in it, then we wouldn't really be in it, if that makes sense.

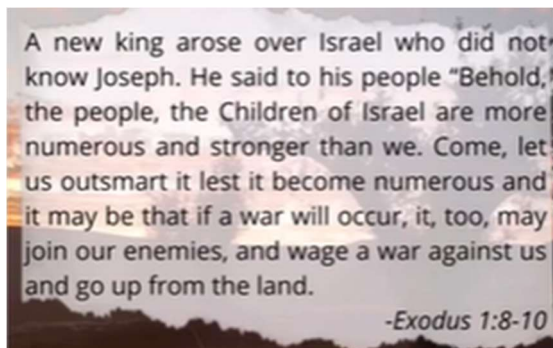
The great Chofetz Chaim, he explains it like this. He says:



I mean I actually found that sort of funny. I've always found that a little bit funny. That Pharaoh's daughter saved Moshe from the Nile and unbeknownst to her, she found Moshe's own mother to be the midwife, to breastfeed Moshe. So he was raised drinking the milk of his own Israeli, Hebrew, righteous mother Yocheved. And then, Pharaoh's daughter paid his mother for doing this service. She paid her to do it. To me

that's just one of those spice carts that we always talk about. That's just like one of those gentle reminders that during these confusing and tumultuous times, HaShem is really running the show.

Anyways, moving on we see how Egypt transitioned from being a very philosemitic, Jew-loving society, who greeted the Jews and recognized all of the great contributions the Jews had made in saving Egypt and transforming it into a global superpower that it had become. It would be sort of hard to deny that. I mean it was so clear and obvious what Joseph did. He became the viceroy and saved all of Egypt. In a public way the Pharaoh himself admitted it. But they transformed so quickly to being a fearful, paranoid and hateful society that turned on the Jews as if overnight. Here's in Exodus chapter 1, verses 8 through 10:



So no one can dispute, I mean, I don't know if Jeremy's in or if he lost electricity. I should take advantage of him not clearly being in this to really talk about what I want to say here, which all of you know. But no one can dispute the very clear pattern throughout Jewish history that our host nations eventually turn against us, just as the prophet said that they would. We've never, and will never truly take root anywhere until it's back in

the Land of our forefathers. Until we return to Judea and we return to Israel.

Just this past Shabbat, my parents were over for Shabbat and they always bring the Jerusalem Post with them, and as I'm reading this verse I look up and I see the front page of the Jerusalem Post and I saw this headline...this past Shabbat! On the Shabbat in which this portion was read, this article in the Jerusalem Post was this right here.



It's worth reading this article. Here's just one highlight. Among the findings, 39% of respondents believe that Jews are more loyal to Israel than the U.S., which is crazy because not even 39% of American Jews ARE loyal to Israel at all! In any capacity. At least that's my take and understanding. Anyways, 20%, according to this article say Jews have too much power in the U.S. Forty-one percent claim that Jews don't care about anyone other than themselves. And 53% say that the Jews will go out of their way to hire other Jews.

So these findings reveal substantial belief in like anti-Jewish troupes, such as Jews are too powerful, selfish, foreign, clannish...I'm not going to get lost in this, but we see it happen right now. Do you guys see it? I mean it's so clear. We hear the logic. That Jews aren't loyal. They'll turn against us, they have the power and the money and it isn't something that they created, this money that the Jews have. But it's stolen from us.

We see this above in verse 9 as Pharaoh says, mimenu (מִמֶּנּוּ), that the Israelites are so strong...people translate that as "stronger than us." But really, denotatively the word means, mimenu is "from us." From within us, that the Israelites have become stronger than from them. From within them. It's the same thing we heard from the House of Lavan. I think that's actually the first time in Jewish history that I really remember it. But it keeps going again and again. Who felt that Jacob's wealth was "from" Lavan, stolen from Lavan. Pharaoh was saying that the wealth of the Israelites was essentially stolen from the Egyptians. And that they have every right to take back what is rightfully theirs.

And actually Rav Soloveitchik says that that initial word in the portion that we just spoke about, bayim, really means when the Torah says that the Israelites were "bayim," were coming in the present tense. Rav Soloveitchik explains that in the minds and the hearts of the Egyptians, it didn't matter that the Israelites had been in Egypt many generations, and that they had essentially saved the Egyptians from famine, starvation and destruction. None of that mattered, none of that mattered. In that moment, at that time, their narrative, their truth, all that mattered to them, it was as if the Israelites were newcomers that had just arrived as foreigners and they were invading Egypt.

Ok, so moving on. Egypt turned to infanticide. Pharaoh issues the edict that the male babies would be murdered, that they be thrown into the Nile, which is unimaginably horrific. You know the Nazis said they had to create gas chambers and crematoriums to cover up their genocide. But the Egyptians had the Nile to hide their crimes which is, by the way, why the first plague seemed so fitted. I'm trying to remember where I heard this. I think it was from Rabbi Jacobson, I don't remember. It was so fitting, so perfect, such poetic justice. What was the first plague? The first plague in which the Nile turned to blood was simply exposing the truth. Which is that the Nile is NOT the source of life as the Egyptians idolatrously claimed. But the Nile was a source of murder and genocide and death. And now the horrific crimes of the entire nation were being revealed, not only to the world, but to their very own eyes. They themselves, the Egyptians themselves couldn't hide from the genocide that they've committed via the Nile.

Anyways, Pharaoh's edict was met with limited success. Because the Jewish midwives, who tradition teaches us were Miriam and Yocheved, right? Moshe's sister and mother, respectively. They refused to implement this order from Pharaoh, his order to murder, obviously at risk of their own lives, as the punishment for blatantly disobeying Pharaoh was quite obviously death. But they would prefer that, as I'm sure obviously we would. It's hard to know what we would really do in that situation. But we see what they did. They risked their own lives willingly, every single birth, rather than to obey this edict from Pharaoh.

So Rav Biederman actually brings the teaching of the Divrei Moshe, who teaches a beautiful idea which I believe is actually particularly important for non-Jews to reflect on, considering the times which we see unfolding around us today. And what role they want to play and would play, as persecution against the Jews increases and the price for standing with Jews and defending them and if need be, hiding them. That price becomes increasingly steep as well. So the Divrei Moshe teaches that there's no mitzvah that brings one as close to HaShem and purifies the soul as much as the mitzvah of self-sacrifice. Willingness to sacrifice your money, your wellbeing, your comfort. But really when we say self-sacrifice, we mean sacrifice of ourselves, our very lives for HaShem.

And so he points out that the edict of Pharaoh, while of course Pharaoh meant it for darkness and evil, well it gave Moshe's mother Yocheved and his sister, Miriam the opportunity to disobey Pharaoh and to put their lives at risk to have true self-sacrifice. And not only did they disobey Pharaoh, but let's actually look into chapter 1, verse 17:

But the midwives feared God and they did not do as the king of Egypt spoke to them, and they caused the boys to live.
-Exodus 1:17

They didn't do it! They didn't do it! They refused. And they caused them to live. They caused every single one of those boys who passed through their arms, they caused them to live. Meaning that not only didn't they kill them, but they nurtured them, and they fed them, and they protected them. Meaning that

this order gave them the opportunity to reveal their love of HaShem and their fear of HaShem over their fear of man. To such a degree that it was due to this self-sacrifice that they themselves merited to be the mother and sister of Moshe and Aaron, the redeemers of Israel. It was because of this sacrifice that they were granted batim, verse 20. We see that right here.

“God benefited the midwives. And the people increased and became very strong. And it was because of the midwife’s fear of HaShem that He made for them houses.”

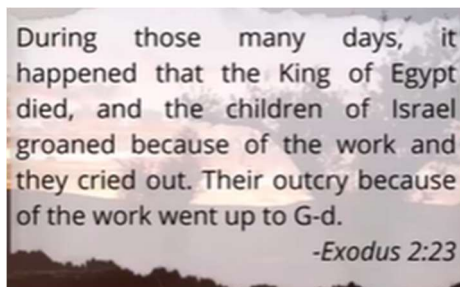
These batim, these houses, the sages of Israel teach were not just physical homes, were not physical homes at all, even though there are those that they were actually locked in their homes and put under house-arrest. But the great consensus among the sages is that when HaShem says, וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם בָּתִּים, they weren’t physical homes, but entire dynasties of kingship and priesthood that would emerge from Moshe and from Aaron. Meaning that this very distressing and painful dilemma that they faced was actually for them, it was the unique opportunity to achieve true greatness in the redemption of the nation.

Which brings us back to a theme which I think HaShem really wants us to internalize right now. Because it’s returning again and again. You know two fellowships ago, we shared how through a slightly different emphasis put on the verse in which Joseph reveals himself to his brothers, we see that Joseph was saying that he was the Yosef that they saw before them at that moment. Remember this teaching? We’ve gone over it again and again. He was the refined, evolved, forgiving Yosef who was the 2nd most powerful man in the world. Why? **Because** they sold him into slavery. That experience, however much suffering their action did cause him to endure, was worth it because it made him who he was. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve shared that with people over the past couple weeks. In the mercholet, in the store, everywhere I go, I’m just sharing that with people. Because it really touched me so deeply.

And then last week we saw that when Joseph passed by the pit into which his brothers threw him, the pit from which he was sold into slavery, he stood by the edge sort of mumbling words to himself and the brothers thought he was like marinating in anger and hatred and resentment. But in truth, he was blessing HaShem for the miracle that occurred to him there. He was filled with gratitude at this very place where his greatest suffering took place.

And now we’re entering into the era of national slavery. Not to Joseph’s personal slavery, but national slavery. And as we mentioned before, this story of slavery and suffering and persecution that speaks to all of us. Right? On the most personal levels. And so, as you can imagine, these portions of personal and national slavery contain treasure troves of wisdom and guidance and how we can relate to our own suffering and to the Egypts that we have in our own lives in this very moment. And by the way, again, Rav Biederman, I want you guys...when

you come to the next Fellowship Connection, we have to bring him out and you need to meet him. A very special man. Anyways, he shared a lot of these teachings. Chapter 2, verse 23:



So Rabbeinu Va'chayah explains that twice it says that they prayed. They cried out to HaShem because of their work twice. And this shows us, he explains, that the best and the most effective prayers come from our pain. Right? They come from our suffering. I don't know why, sometimes I have clarity as to why, but I'm not going to act like I understand it all. But it's true and I've seen it to

be true. If we can summon the faith and the trust IN those most difficult, painful times, in those times of suffering. Those are the most powerful and effective prayers. And friends, I have to say, that this pamphlet, I don't know if you can see it or it's blanking me out, you see the pamphlet right here? Yes, you can see it right here. This pamphlet that Ardelle so faithfully compiles and sends me has become a sort of prayer book, a sort of siddur for me as well. Because you know, in this book, so many of you bare your souls. And share your suffering and it's real. And it's intense. And I go there with you and it's hard. And also, even more than that, you share your faith and your confidence in HaShem. The prayer points. I love the way so many of you include the prayer points. You tell the story, you share what's happening and you say here are the exact things that I'm requesting for you to pray for. For the size of the tumor to go down, for the spirits to go up...it's just such a beautiful thing. It's so detailed and it's so obviously and clearly the way to pray. And I'm not going to act or pretend that I have not learned very much about my own prayer and the depth of it from all of you. You have taught me so much, you really have.

And that my friends, that faith, that confidence, that is the highest level. That's the greatest opportunity to thank HaShem for the suffering while you're still in the thick of it. We cannot repeat...we should do every Fellowship about this right now. I can't help but to think this is such an important thing for us to remember. While we're still in Egypt, and we still have no idea, as King David says in Psalm 121:

From where will my help come?

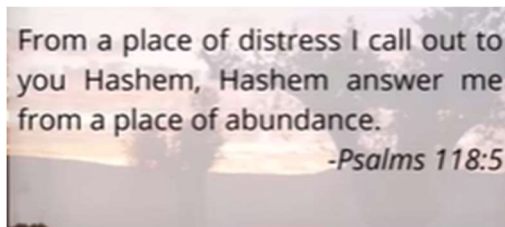
We don't know where...that is the time to have the faith. And you're just all so inspiring to me. You give me strength in navigating my own confusion and dealing with my own suffering. Much of what so many of you are going through really puts things into perspective. And I have tremendous gratitude and we all should. You know sometimes, I'm like, I tell Shaena, I say to her like, "This is the best time of my entire life. If you're able to picture where we could have been and where we are now, what could we want?" She's like, "Shhh...don't say that out loud!" It's almost like there's this old Jewish housewife thing, where it's like you don't want to open up an evil eye.

(transmission lost)

...have this discussion lovingly, but no, it' to make a point of it. And to say, "Thank You, HaShem." Know that we'll be able to be there together, but right now, Thank You, HaShem, Thank You, HaShem.

Anyways, so what was I saying? So that's what we're doing here in the Fellowship right? We're holding each other up in our emunah, in our faith, and in our bitachon, in our trust in HaShem, which is really the internalization of that faith, helping each other on that journey together.

And so Rav Biederman actually goes on to bring one of my favorite verses to further this argument. And it's from Tehillim, Psalm 118, chapter 118, verse 5. Now I've shared this with you before because a different reading and understanding of it is so beautiful to me as well:

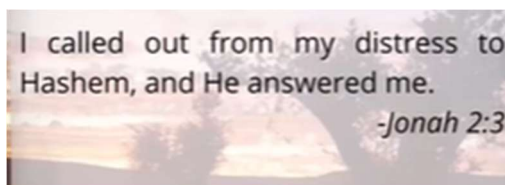


Right? So, the beautiful teaching that I always focus on, that I never thought of, is reading it this way. From a place of distress or constraints, I call out to you, HaShem, and HaShem answered me, "you are in a place of abundance, you are there in a place of abundance, right now." It's all about your perception

and that's true.

But also, just the simplest meaning, speaks to us here as well. From a place of constraints and distress, I call out to you, HaShem. HaShem answered me from a place of abundance. HaShem answered me from His place of abundance. Meaning we see here that when we turn to HaShem and prayed to Him from a place of distress, HaShem responds to our pleas. He responds to us then, just as with Yocheved and Miriam were put in a position of great distress, it was that distress that brought about their salvation. So too, it's our cries from our greatest place of confusion and distress that pierced the highest realms and are accepted and heard out with love and compassion before HaShem's holy throne in the highest realms.

We can find this idea you know, throughout the whole Tanakh, throughout Psalms, throughout the whole story of the Jewish people. You know Rav Biederman brings one from the book of Jonah, chapter 2, verse 3:



From our place of distress, HaShem answered me.

Or Psalm 34, verse 19:

Hashem is close to the broken hearted; those crushed in spirit He delivers.

-Psalms 34:19

And so, my friends, here we are embarking on the slavery and redemption of the Israelites from Egypt in the Torah and it couldn't come at a better time when so many of us are seeking our own redemptions. When the Jewish people are seeking redemption, when the entire world, whether they know it or not, we're all seeking redemption. And I want to bless you and bless myself and bless the world that we're able to really fortify ourselves in our faith as we face the challenges and the pain and the suffering that we all may have and really do have in our lives. Everybody's facing something, remember that. Everybody is facing something. No matter how happy their Facebook pictures may look.

And I want to bless us that you know, that in the midst of that suffering, we're able to be grateful. Not only for all the good in our lives, but even more so for the suffering itself. Because while we may not know how or why, Hashem is with us in the suffering. And by the way, we're not going to get to this part in our Fellowship today, but that is why our sages tell us that when Moshe asks HaShem, what name to tell the children of Israel when they asked who sent him. He said, they're going to say, who sent me? What name do I say? **אֲשֶׁר אֲדֹנָיָהּ** **אֲדֹנָיָהּ** That he is to say, "I will be that which I will be." That HaShem IS existence itself, meaning that as we cry, HaShem cries with us, and as we suffer, HaShem suffers with us. And I just bless us to know that. To know that in our heads and to internalize that in our hearts. That HaShem is the ultimate reality of the world and we are never alone. Because not only are we there for each other, but on the deepest level, HaShem is with us and He's guiding us and He's holding our hand and He's crying with us. And as we are yearning for redemption, HaShem is yearning for redemption, too. And if we bring that truth into our hearts, well there is no greater consolation and no greater strength than that.

Ok, so friends, please continue to send your blessings and your prayers and your prayer requests. Stay connected. Keep in touch, right? On the deepest level, that is what this Fellowship is about. And this is the time, if anyone has anything they want to share, maybe you just want to digest. No pressure, this is the time to raise that hand. But may we see more blessings come from this holy Fellowship.

And speaking of blessings, it's my joy to bless all of you with the blessing of Aaron the High Priest.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

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

Shalom, my friends. Love you all. Stay in touch, stay strong, love you so much!