

Session 165

Israel at War: The Light at the End of the Tunnels

24 December 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZpxx LIcRY>

Jeremy

Shalom, everybody, shalom, shalom. It's great to see you...I was just like watching these videos and the slide show. And I can't help myself. I've seen them so many times and yet, still I watch them and they bring out so much emotions in me. Now there are few of those videos that I have to share, there's a lot of significance in some of them. And some of them we'll have to release a little bit later. But thank you again, Tabitha, for putting them all together. Every week the slide show is so significant and so meaningful. It's giving people, it's like, behind the scenes, what the media is not covering, you find all these beautiful little stories and pictures. It's just marvelous, so thank you for that, thank you to all of you for coming. Ed, Julie, great to see you. Richard, great to see you, Cal and Ardelle, it's so nice to see you. It's just so nice to see all of you. Tar, great to see you. It's just been a roller coaster, as you can imagine here in the Land of Israel. And just watching those videos, that love exists when those kids come home. And the twin brothers, when they walk through the door...one and then the other...the mother is just beside herself with joy that both of her boys are back from Gaza. But you know, without the war, the love that was embedded inside somewhere. But the war has unleashed this love into the world. It wouldn't have been felt in such a dramatic way. It wouldn't have been released into the world in such a potent, powerful...like tears are being jerked out of my eyes because something is happening in Israel today.

There is a spirit that is being poured onto the people of Israel. And it's manifesting itself in love that's never been felt in such a powerful way. And an openness after our hearts have been broken. Our hearts are open now, for the first time in a very long time. And I want to talk about all of that in the Fellowship. But before we do anything, I really want to use this opportunity to pray, and I know that the prayers of the lovers of Israel around the world, that are thinking about our soldiers and thinking about the hostages and thinking about all of the Jews in Israel that are under such threat. It is the bullet proof vest for our nation. It is what is protecting us, it's what's guarding us. And to have this opportunity where all of us are together from all over the world. It is so unique and so special that I want us all to kick off the Fellowship with a united prayer, like one person with one heart with one Land and one God.

HaShem, Master of the universe, it feels like in some ways we're starting to see the light at the end of this war. And it feels like as we approach victory, the stakes are getting higher and higher. HaShem, please don't let Israel make a mistake. Don't let us drop the ball right as we're about to cross the finish line. Grant our leaders wisdom and courage to do what needs to be done for the future of Israel. Guard our soldiers, protect them, guide them to victory. HaShem these hard times, they're changing us. It feels like we're going through some sort of cardiac surgery.

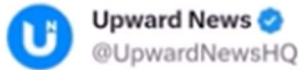
We're on the operating table and it's so painful now. There's no anesthesia and our hearts are being broken, our hearts are opening up. And so, as our hearts are open now, please shine Your light into our hearts, into the hearts of Israel. We have been so humbled. Please let us return to the path that You've chosen for us. Please allow us to grow upright, please allow us to become the nation that You chose us to be. HaShem, we believe that He's coming. We await His arrival every day. HaShem, please make us worthy. Send us the leader that we need to lead us toward victory. Send us the leader we need to build a new Jerusalem. Send us the leader we need that will lead us toward You and lead us toward a new world. We need a leader now, so please HaShem, reveal Mashiach, reveal Him to us, bring Him to Israel and let him lead us to victory. Amen.

Alright my friends, so, I have a lot that I want to talk about today on the Fellowship. And it's going to be a little bit of a roller coaster. Because on the one hand, war is happening. But on the other hand, there are great opportunities and a lot of joy. But what I want to do first, I want to bring everyone into the living reality of Israel. And it's...this is more than behind-the-scenes coverage. This is sort of like into the heart reporting. What is happening to the hearts of the people of Israel. Because we are watching the greatest and final transition of biblical history. And to really understand Israel and what's happening in this miracle country, you have to know the facts on the ground.

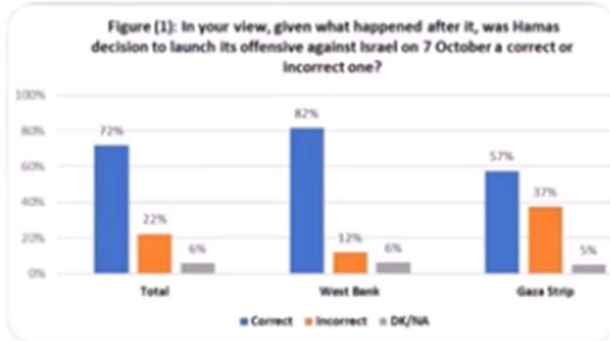
And so, what happened on October 7th changed everything in this country. Israel will never be the same again. Some people are calling October 7th a Holocaust, the Shoah of October 7th. But that's really not the right word. It wasn't a Holocaust, it was a Pogrom. And to think that in 2023 the Jewish people experienced a Pogrom inside the modern state of Israel, it's really mind blowing. And every Jew, like we grew up with the history and the stories of Pogroms in Europe, you know the massacre of thousands of Jews in Germany, around like 1,300 by the German leader, Rindfleisch. And in 1600 the massacres of Bogdan Khmelnytsky, the leader of the Kosack, tens of thousands of Jews were murdered and 300 communities were just pillaged and destroyed.

And all of a sudden, more than a thousand of Jews murdered in a day in kibbutzim, burned and destroyed. We've experienced a Pogrom INSIDE the Land of Israel. And in that way, October 7th connected every disconnected Jew to a thousand-year-old history. A reminder of the Jewish exile that we've almost forgotten about. Where Jews were persecuted and murdered for being Jews. And now, modern Israelis who never really gave much thought about their Jewish identity, are being forced to ask themselves, "Why am I a Jew so hated for being a Jew? Why is it so significant to these murderers that I'm a Jew when being a Jew is not so significant in my life?" And maybe it's not so insignificant. And now their hearts are being opened.

And so, there was a poll that was conducted looking into what Arabs in the Land of Israel thought about the Pogrom of October 7th.

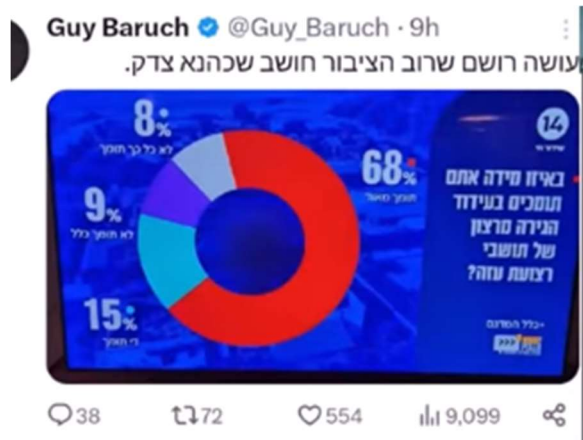


SHOCK POLL: Brand new polls show that 72% of Palestinians now support the 10/7 massacre. Support for Hamas has also tripled in the West Bank.



And incredibly, 72% of Arabs in Gaza and Judea and Samaria, support the massacre of October 7th. Now 72% is a lot, but what's more important and what's more eye-opening is that 82% of the Arabs in Judea and Samaria support the massacre of October 7th. More than 8 out of 10 Arabs in Judea and Samaria...I mean when you think about that, you need to understand, it's just a matter of time until the Gaza war spills over into the rest of Israel.

And this is just another wake-up call to what's happening in Israel. We wanted to believe in peace, we wanted to have hope that we would be able to live side by side in peace. What we see as Jews, we are no different than any other minority in the Middle East and the Arabs around us will persecute us and if they can they will kill us, and if they can, they will absolutely wipe us out.



And so now, a new poll came out asking Israelis what they think Gaza should look like the day after the war. And obviously, the best solution and also the most just consequence for the Gazans, it's really the only thing that will bring long lasting security to Israel, is to allow them to leave. And the absolute disaster and war zone that they brought upon themselves when they elected the Hamas the reality is now, what do we do with these Gazans?

So 68% fully support, 15% support, meaning more than 80% of Israelis are now saying the Gazans need to go. They should voluntarily...let's help them leave and get them out of Israel. That's really the only long-lasting solution. And it's amazing, the same people that complained that Gaza was an open-air prison and it's over-populated, are now the same people that don't want to allow them to leave voluntarily. Is there any other country in the world where it's even a question about whether people should be allowed to voluntarily leave?

It's just another example of their false virtue and their fake empathy. They cry about the plight of the Arabs in Gaza, but then, want to condemn them to a life that they don't want to live. And

when it comes to the millions of Arabs and Muslims around the world...that are displaced, that are murdered, that are put into concentration camps in China...silence. So it's obvious. All of these pro-Gazans that don't want them to leave voluntarily, it's just an attack against the Jews. And it's just an attempt to destroy Israel. Because what better way to keep Israel weak, by having people that are hell-bent on Israel's destruction, constantly at them in Gaza, that in 5 years from now, or in 8 years from now, or in 2 months from now, they'll attack Israel again and attack Israel again. So obviously, they don't want them to leave, they are serving their purpose just fine.

But perhaps, once again, it's pointing us to another prophecy in the Bible. And so far the Bible is batting 100% with regards to the situation in Israel. Every single prophecy has come to pass. Every single word of advice that the Torah has given us is true. And when we don't listen to the words of the Torah, where has it left us? Just with war. And so maybe it's time we take advice from the Torah and not the Biden administration.

So here in Genesis, chapter 21, verse 10, Sarah prophesizes. And Sarah says to Abraham:

Therefore she [Sarah] said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman will not inherit with my son, Isaac."
-Genesis 21:10

Now most people understand that as like Sarah is commanding Isaac, "This son will not inherit with my son, Isaac." That's not what she's saying. She's just stating a fact. "This Ishmael, cannot inherit with Isaac. He doesn't know how to share. They won't be able to inherit the Land together. We need to separate them or else there will be war, constantly."

So what are we seeing now? We're seeing that we have to separate from Ishmael in the Land of Israel. And so, the Bible, once again, once Israel decides and chooses to live by the Torah. We really thought that we were going to be successful in the Land of Israel and not follow the guidance of the Torah? There's just no chance that that's ever going to happen. But I think finally now, people are waking up to the ultimate reality that Israel's success is really based on the promise that if we walk in the path of the Torah, we'll be blessed. And if we veer from the path, and the guidance, and the wisdom of the Torah, curses will come upon us.

And so now, Israel is going to have to make a choice. Do we listen to the Biden administration? Or do we follow the Torah of the God of Israel. And that's what this war...as it's coming to an end, that's going to be the big question that's placed before us. And I just pray to God that Israel has the courage and the faith to do what needs to be done.

And so, I've been telling everyone in our Fellowship that there's a spiritual revival that's happening in Israel now. And it feels like a rubber band that's being stretched...right now we're being stretched, and it's just going to propel us and launch Israel higher than we've ever been.

And there's an openness now and a yearning and a humility that has made room for a new light to enter into our hearts. And it's hard to show you proof of something spiritual that's happening in the hearts of Israel. You sort of just have to take my word for it. And then, all of a sudden, a friend of mine sends me this picture of one of the largest highways in Tel Aviv.



I've never seen a billboard like that before. It's a picture of a secular looking Jew. And what is he doing? He's saying, "Shema Yisrael, HaShem Eloheinu, HaShem echad." Hear O Israel, HaShem is our God, HaShem is one. A giant billboard of a secular Jew on the highway in the heart of Tel Aviv. In my life, I've never seen such a billboard like that in Tel Aviv. And that's just an exterior manifestation of what's happening right now in this Land.

And at the same time, as this spiritual renaissance is giving birth now, it's like the first rays are happening in the Land of Israel, the situation in America, in Europe for Jews is not looking good. So my good friend, Abi Abelow was just brought to Los Angeles to talk about Gaza. He made a beautiful movie during the time of the disengagement, and the Jewish community in Los Angeles wanted to be connected to the story of the Jews that used to live in Gaza. And when we disengaged from Gaza and tried to kind of create a quasi-State for the Arabs in Gaza, it was like our first attempt at trying to create a two-state solution and let them govern themselves. And the whole world invested billions of dollars to help them build their economy. And instead of building hospitals and building an economy, they built terror tunnels. And they wanted to invite Avi to really sort of tell the story.

And as he was getting ready for this event, he flew to Los Angeles and he said that the local police did not let him, or the synagogue, advertise the event anywhere on social media or the public sphere. They were scared that the synagogue was going to be targeted and attacked because they're having a speaker from Israel come and talk about Gaza. In the middle of Los Angeles.

And so you think about the way the Jews are living now in America, and all of a sudden I was sent this screen shot on a group called "Jewish women talk about anything." Listen to this story. She writes a question.



Jewish Women Talk About Anything

Anonymous member · 1d · 🌐

Hidden/invisible mezuzah

Are there any kind of mezuzot one could use, so that delivery people would not notice them right away? I heard that this is used for example in France, but can not Google it.

We had an Israeli family staying with us right after October 7th and they were so scared, that we took the mezuzah down and put it inside. Since then me and my kids are constantly sick and I strongly believe that this is not a coincidence, however my husband does not want to put it back, since we have an office the door right next to ours where strangers are constantly going in and out.... So any kind of ideas how we could hide a mezuzah outside would be very helpful!

And so imagine that, Jews in America now are hiding their mezuzahs like the way they had to do in Europe before the Holocaust. And there are halachas, that you are allowed to take the mezuzahs and then cover it with cement so not to show yourself to be Jewish in order to protect your life. But that's the way the Jews are living now in the free country of America, the country of tolerance, the country of liberalism, the country of acceptance. Where if you misgender someone, that's considered a micro-aggression or violence. Jews are scared to put up a mezuzah because they're scared for their lives. Like what a contrast is happening right now

around the world.

And so, it's setting the stage, it's setting the stage. And with all that's going on, the roller coaster of life – the highs, the lows, the drama, Friday, we participated in the most beautiful Brit, the most beautiful ceremony of Ari's son's circumcision. It was beyond. But I want to allow Ari to tell you his side of the story. Because I was just a small participant in the ceremony. So I want to invite Ari now just to kind of share with you now the human story as we're all just kind of going through this national upheaval. Children are being born, couples are getting married, so you have an opportunity to really hear from the inside of the hearts of the people that are really here on the front lines in Judea. So Ari, if you're here with us, there you are. Excellent.

Ari

I am, I am here with you. And Jeremy, you...shalom everybody. Jeremy, you were a lot more than a small participant in this. You actually got to take the baby and put him onto the seat of Elijah the prophet. There's not very many honors to be given out in the circumcision ceremony. And I definitely was not going to let you do the cutting! So that was it, and so you had a lot more than a little part of that.

But yeah, so it's so good to see all of you. I've noticed a lot of people have been really appreciative to me as if I purposefully did something. Just there's so much sadness and darkness and heartbreak. But to see building and life coming into the world, it's just such a breath of relief for people. And for me as well, for my family, it's definitely difficult to be waking up in the morning, five dead, eight dead. And then seeing my family and my new baby. It's just such a war of perception and focus and emotions. And how to bring it all together and live with it as one, it's a big challenge.

But I just wanted to start by thanking all of you for the huge flurry of mazel tovs and blessings that you've been flooding me with. I don't know how many times I can say it, but my cup poureth over. I'm a blessed man, and a great, great part of that blessing is having all of you in my life. And really more than you can know.

In your messages to me, many of you have been asking about the name. What's the name, why is that the name? And so, with your blessing, Jeremy, I wanted to take this opportunity to share the speech that I gave at the Brit Milah of my son. And usually when I give a speech, you know, I like to craft it, I like to work it through, I like to practice it a few times. It didn't work out that way for me. So I went up there saying, "HaShem, please speak through me. I don't know how this thing is going to turn out."

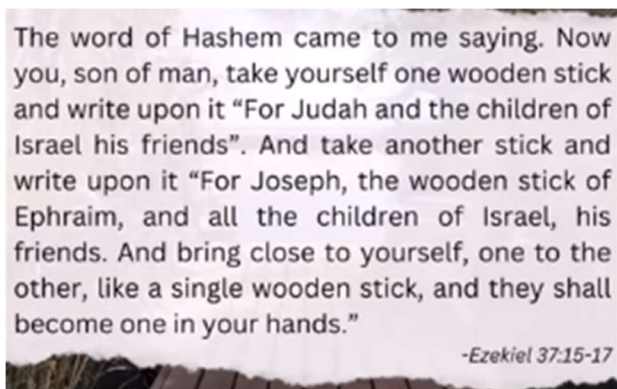
You know but first, I just want to say that it's funny because the last week, I spoke about his birth itself with all of you I shared that story with you. About the birth, about getting to the hospital, about the bomb sirens and about Shaena hiding in the shelter with our new infant. I shared all of that with you. I remember not that long ago, around Pesach time, I spent a number of Fellowships talking with you about my father's illness and his passing and what that was like for me. You know, in our Fellowship, we don't only talk about the Torah portion, or even current events, we talk about our lives, we talk about our journeys and our feelings and our vulnerabilities. And so many of you turned to me and share your own struggles with me and we talk about those and we explore those together.

And you know, when people ask me about the Fellowship, I have trouble defining what exactly this Fellowship is. Because it's so much more than a Torah class, it's so much more than academic, it's even more than a community. It really feels like family. But if I'm going to be completely forthright, despite the fact that on an experiential level, this Fellowship has truly felt to me like a family...pretty close to the beginning of the Fellowship, it had this family feeling to it. I often struggled intellectually with the idea because while it's true that on some level, all of humanity is a family in my mind. There is my immediate family and then the family of the Jewish people, and that's pretty much the people that I considered comfortable calling family in a real way.

And then the rest of the world, well after all that we've been through, it would be hard for me to consider a non-Jew as literally family. Maybe distant cousins at best. But here in the Fellowship, despite the fact that many of you are neither my immediate family, nor are you even Jews. Many of you are now Jews. On the deepest level, you felt like family to me. On a level that really transcends at some point, my intellectual understanding of how that could be, but it is what it is. It's true and it's what it feels...it feels real and true in that way. Many of you for years now it's been that way.

Anyways, the reason I'm going into this is because over Shabbat when I was reading the Torah portion of Vayigash, I came by a teaching of Rav Yitzchak Ginsberg who was undoubtedly one of the greatest minds and loftiest spirits in the nation today. And he said something that I've thought about, I've reflected upon in depth before. We've even spoken about it here and there, but I've never directly heard of a prominent rabbinic leader in Israel who actually said this. And keep in mind, I'm going to share with you my understanding of it, but Rav Ginsberg's ideas are so far beyond what I'm sharing with you, this is just one small dimension, one facet of it.

So Rav Ginsberg starts by discussing the Haftarah, the portion of the prophets that we read with each Torah portion. And this portion was from the 37th chapter of Yechezkel, of Ezekiel. So let's start with the beginning of the Haftarah in verse 15:



The word of Hashem came to me saying. Now you, son of man, take yourself one wooden stick and write upon it "For Judah and the children of Israel his friends". And take another stick and write upon it "For Joseph, the wooden stick of Ephraim, and all the children of Israel, his friends. And bring close to yourself, one to the other, like a single wooden stick, and they shall become one in your hands."
-Ezekiel 37:15-17

And so that was always a very curious prophecy to me. I've thought about it a lot, there was a lot of discussion about it. And so, you know, this was a prophecy. And so on the simplest level, everybody could understand about the two kingdoms. You know there's the kingdom in the south of Israel, comprised of Judah and there is some of Benjamin in there. And the kingdom of the north, led by Ephraim, children of Joseph and comprised of

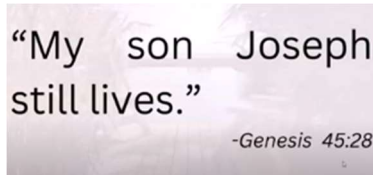
the other tribes. And they were of course exiled many years before the Kingdom of the south. And the prophecy is that they would unite together eventually as one.

Now Rav Ginsberg's teaching, like I said, has much more to it than that. But one small dimension of it is that this reunion is much more than just the tribes reuniting. This is nothing less than a hint to Messianic times in which Mashiach can only be fully expressed and revealed when both aspects of...the Judah dimension, meaning the Davidic line and the Ephraim dimension, meaning Joseph's line...Mashiach can only arrive when both of these aspects can be fully expressed and developed.

So Rav Ginsberg boldly teaches that while the Jews of today are mostly descendants of the southern Kingdom of Judah, the descendants of Joseph, too, are destined to be gathered in separately, much as they were exiled separately. And these descendants of Joseph and the other tribes, Rav Ginsberg teaches, remain exiled around the world. And although they do not identify as Jews, and have the outward appearance of Jews per se, they have a distant kinship with the Jewish people.

And so how are we supposed to identify these descendants from Joseph and the other tribes? How are we supposed to recognize our long, lost brethren? Well I don't think we need to

identify them. I think they identify themselves. And according to Rav Ginsberg, you can spot them based on a special feeling of affection that these people have for Torah. And for the Jewish people. What I understood from Rav Ginsberg is that when Jacob heard of Joseph's fate in Egypt from the brothers and he saw the wagons and he realized it was true, he explained, "My son, Joseph, still lives!"



Now there's no exclamation marks, question marks, we don't know if that was a question or a rhetorical question or what that was, but it seems it's a declarative statement. My son Joseph still lives. And this statement from Jacob was a spiritual illusion to the descendants of Joseph in whose souls the spark is still alive. And the strength of that spark is most powerfully manifest in this strong love that they have in their hearts for Israel and the Jewish people. A love that they themselves may not even understand. And I wouldn't be surprised at all, if this sounds very familiar to many of you. And it will be in the times of Mashiach, that these souls will be awakened and brought together with the descendants of Judah, culminating in the Mashiach ruling over all of them, over all of us. And that's exactly why I feel like this Fellowship is so much more than academic classes studying the Torah. That's why it feels like a family to me, because it is, it is.

And so...just as I shared this great moment in my life of my son's circumcision with my family, my cousins, and my siblings, and my mother, it feels good and right and fitting to share it with all of you because I do believe that there's a very real family thing going on here. Anyways, here it is.



I know it's Friday, everybody has to prepare for Shabbat, and I'm going to try to stay focused here, which will help because I don't have almost anything written here to say. But I want start by thanking all of you for coming out to a Brit Milah on a fast day. That's friendship, that's friendship. And we will not forget it, we're very grateful. Before I say anything else, I want to thank HaShem, katonti. In a thousand lifetimes, I could not thank You, HaShem for all the life and the kindness and the goodness you've showered upon me and Shaena and Dvash and Shiloh and now little Mordecai Shimshon. Thank you, HaShem, I'm undeserving. Thank You. Amen.

Ok, so if I'm going to start somewhere talking about my little Mordecai Shimshon, it would have to be ... because Mordecai Shimshon came into the world less than three hours after we lit Chanukah candles together as a family, filling our home with the beautiful light of the eight candles of Chanukah, the time where the world is the darkest and Am Yisrael brings our light to

the world, our greatest light in the darkest times. I don't think Shaena and I had any idea the amount of light that was going to come into the world just a few hours later.

And so we're talking about... and I'm looking around, I want to share with you something a little bit personal, it's a little bit vulnerable and I'm grateful that Shaena was as well blessing me. Without her blessing, I would not be able to talk about this, but I wanted to share it because – A. That's what Chanukah is about, that's when this beautiful, holy baby boy came into the world, and that's what Am Yisrael is for, to show the whole world that everything is a nes.

So I'm going to share a little bit of our journey. You know, Shaena and I...I'm looking around, you know we're friends here, we're family here, we decided Shirat David because this is our community, this is our family. So most of you know, a large part of my journey, of Shaena's journey. The fact that about ten years went by between my first date with Shaena and our getting married. And there was a long and often painful and arduous and refining journey that we both went through and then we came together, after we had been sort of shattered and broken in our own ways. I don't think either of us even regrets any part of that because without that journey, we would not be the people that we needed to be to have the vessels to be able to contain the overwhelming light that HaShem is shining into our lives, constantly, all of the time, every day. I can't tell you, just in the past week, how many times a day Shaena and I look at each other and we're like, "How did this happen? How did this happen? It's just too much, it's just too much."

But we're so grateful and so it's been a journey and we got married at the age of 38. And when we saw that the pregnancy, baby thing wasn't happening on its own...I mean you know what I mean, like on its own, it wasn't happening. Anyways, Shaena said, "Just don't make it weird." So we decided to open the channels of light that HaShem could shine into our lives and there's this miraculous technology that He sent into the world and we decided we're going to open up all of the road of shefa and seek fertility treatments. And baruch HaShem, you know we davened, we poured out our hearts, we said Tehillim together every day. As if there were no treatments. But baruch HaShem, we were blessed when we were 40 years old with Dvash Esther, who is my best friend. And everybody knows that. And I could talk about Dvash Esther and we'd be here until next Chanuka. But that's not what this is about right now. But we're blessed with Dvash Esther, the greatest light and joy and sweetness.

And then we were 42, we pursued again treatments and baruch HaShem, different levels...you know there's different levels of intervention and whatever. But when we turned 42, we were blessed with Shiloh Netzach. And my father was able to hold him in his brit milah, and now I'm saying Kadish for my father, holding my next baby boy. But Shiloh Netzach came into the world when we were 42.

And then, already Shaena and I were just so, so, so grateful. But you know there's the holy chutzpah. And we said, "HaShem, maybe another one, maybe another one." And so, you know, we're 43 at the time, 42, 43, and so we realized that by the laws of nature which really mean nothing, particularly in the hills of Judea in the Land of Israel, the windows would be shutting. So we pursued fertility treatments and it just wasn't taking and it wasn't happening. And one impediment after another, it was a very difficult time because my father's health was failing at the time and I was with him much of the time in the hospital with my sisters, who were incredible and my mother who was incredible. And how caring and loving my father.

But it was a difficult time and Shaena had to bear the brunt of the challenges on the fertility treatment. Which brings us to April 13th, I'll never forget. I was lying in bed and Shaena was standing by the corner of the room by the door to the bathroom and she said, "Ari, I have to tell you something. You're not going to believe it, you're not going to believe it, but I'm expecting!" And I couldn't believe it! No treatments, no interventions, nothing! Just HaShem sent the greatest miracle. And we tried not to get too excited, but good luck, right? You know how these things go, you never know, but the next day...just hours later, the next afternoon, my father left the world.

My father left the world, Mordecai Hershel Ben Yechiel Zalman. He left the world. Which brings me to the name. So my father was my best friend, he was my greatest teacher, he was the greatest influence on my life. He showered me with so much love, so much love that it just opened my heart to a capacity of love that just pours over to my family, to Am Yisrael, to the world, and I'm just so grateful for that. Without him, who knows who I would be, where I would be. And so he passed away and it's just such a great joy and honor and privilege. It makes me so happy that every time I'm going to see this little boy, I called him after my father, Mordecai. Mordecai Shimshon. And in so many ways, Shaena and I felt like this is the finding out...the way it happened, the way it was, their souls are interconnected. And I'm just so eager to see how that works out.

But at the same time, this baby has come into the world at a time for Am Yisrael that is perhaps the most painful and trying and difficult time we've been through in modern history, possibly in history all together. We're still, for those who say we've defeated Chamas, there's still just yesterday, the Jews in Tel Aviv and in Ashkelon had to run into bomb shelters. But kilul HaShem, with Chamas still existing and one member of Chamas breathing is still before us and there's Chezbollah and there's Iran and there's Syria and there's so much that Am Yisrael is facing still. Really an existential threat for our very existence. But we know there's no chance, they have no chance, that Hashem is with us. HaShem is with us, we know that.

But none the less, they're seeking our destruction. And at the very same time, so much of the West, so many countries around the world are trying to pressure and coerce Israel into making these irrational, suicidal measures that will endanger our own chayalim (soldiers), kill our own

precious jewels. Every chaya is a jewel, is a diamond, is the most precious in the world. One chaya in my mind is worth the entire...all of Gaza. And they're pressuring us to have this fictitious mercy to our enemies.

And I know that my father, Mordecai Herschel, he embodied the attributes of Mordecai H'Yehudi, after which he was ultimately named. So much that we were actually going to put that Pasuk on his matzevah – And Mordecai did not bow and he did not yield. He did not give into the pressure of the goyim, he did not give into the pressure of the world to bow down to Haman, even if his life depended on it. He would not bow, he would not yield. And my bracha is that my little Mordecai brings that co'ach, brings that light, brings that energy to Am Yisrael and to our leadership of Am Yisrael.

And then, Shimshon. Now that's, that's a journey, that's a story. I really hope Shimshon gives me the words to explain it. I'll try to explain it as well as I can, but we all know how this works. HaShem puts it on our minds and on our hearts, there's a touch of prophecy there, more than a touch. And then we try to rationalize it. But the name of Shimshon came from the deepest yearning, the deepest tefillah, that Am Yisrael will be blessed with leadership that is a true reflection of Am Yisrael right now. Of a leadership that will have real strength, real strength. And I'm not talking about physical strength, I'm talking about spiritual strength. The type of strength that can only come from fierce, passionate, unwavering love for Am Yisrael. The type of love that would cause Shimshon HaGibor to rise up and to slay with a wrathful vengeance, slay the Philistines that had been terrorizing Am Yisrael, that had been inflicting and persecuting Am Yisrael and he rose to the occasion, even if it meant on his own...because it was on his own. That's how great his love was.

That's why Ya'acov Avinu said he thought it was Mashiach. Because his love was so great for Am Yisrael that he didn't need power and position and title and rank or even recognition. He was willing to create this whole ploy in order that the Plishtin would perceive his attacks against them as just a rogue Jew with a vendetta. So much so, that when they came to Am Yisrael and said, "We're the power here, we're going to wipe you out here." He said to Am Yisrael, he said to his fellow Judeans, "No, no, no. Turn me in. Just don't allow them to return me into the Phlistins. He wanted them to turn him in, rather than one Jew to be hurt.

Shimshon...and the name Shimshon comes Shamash. And here I just need to say, I don't know how to share this without saying what I need to say now. Because you know, the name Shimshon, it was maybe three weeks ago on Shabbat and I was sitting and studying Torah in the morning. And I was studying this concept, this idea of Shimshon and it just pierced my heart in such a deep way and I said, "Shaena, this name. It just did something to me. What do you think?" And I said, Shimshon, and Shaena goes, "Oooh, ok, let me just sit with that." And so we were sitting with that on Shabbat and then I went to Shul and I came back and we're sitting with our beloved friends who have risen to the occasion unbelievably, Jeremy and Tehila, and we

were having kiddush with them. And I said to them...now keep in mind, nobody knew the gender. Nobody knew anything. Only me and Shaena, nobody knew anything.

And I said to them, "You know this morning I came by a name and it really affected me powerfully. And within a millisecond, Tehila said, 'Shimshon.'" And Shaena and I just turned white. She didn't know the gender, she was just as shocked as all of us were. And so, that happened, and then...but Shimshon was in our hearts. And then just a few days ago, we get a knock on our door at like 6:30 in the morning which does not happen. And it's Tehila again. And she said, "I need to just tell you about a dream that I had." She said, "I had a dream about the name, Shimshon."

You understand why I have to tell you this whole story because the teaching that she shared, that came down to her from HaShem, through Tehila, well...it helped me understand why this is this boy's name. And she said, forgive me if I misquote. She's far more intelligent than I am. But she said, "It comes not from shemesh. Because understand that shemesh, it was during the darkest times and Adam Harishon was afraid that it was so dark and then the shemesh came up, but no really, it comes from shamesh, from the shamesh.

And what's the shamesh? How is the shamesh different from the other candles? All the other candles...the shamash may not have light, the same lofty rank in kiddusha and adherence to all the mitzvoth, but the shamash says, "It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter." Nothing matters, use me to bring light to Am Yisrael. Use me to bring light to the world." And that's who Shimshon was. He said nothing mattered, the rank, the power, the position. Nothing mattered. That was his love for Am Yisrael.

And so we have here little Mordecai Shimshon. May we all merit to have the co'ach return to Am Yisrael. And by the way, it's already here, it's already here. It just needs to trickle up to our leadership, to Mashiach who we're waiting for every single moment of every single day. The unyielding dedication of Mordecai, the love for Am Yisrael and willingness to serve Am Yisrael no matter what of Shimshon, may that light come into the world and here we are now on Aserah v'Tevet.

There's all sort of reasons I know that there's the powerful magnitude and meaning and dimension of the fact that he was born just hours after lighting the 8th candle of Chanuka and then he has his brit milah on aserah v'Tevet. But I'm just a goat farmer in Judea. I'm trying to figure out why my chickens aren't giving me eggs. I don't necessarily understand all the connections, but I do know that the great destruction, the reason this fast day is so heavy, because this is when the dominos began to fall. This is when the destruction began, the siege began and it all flowed from here.

So I want to bless all of us that that fast day, that aserah v'Tevet should be transformed into a day of joy and simcha, all the tears should be dried and the brit milah of my son should start the very fast, quick final momentum of the building of the beit hamikdash and the arrival of Mashiach. And so, being that we can't have breakfast here right now ... the breakfast that we so wanted to have with you. We do have outside, these bags of delectable goodness from Prohibition Pickle, our good friends over here and the purpose of it is to bring into your Shabbat, to beautify your Shabbat and to bring the simcha of Mordecai Shimshon's brit milah and to enter into Israel, and to bring that with you into Shabbat. Amen

One second, one second, I need to just say, I can't believe I forgot to say, especially after Shiloh's...Shaena! Shaena, thank you! You are my light and my goodness, all of my happiness in my life. Without you I would just be a sad dude, looking down on the ground. You've given me all the joy and all the goodness and you're a super-hero. Thank you. (end of video)

Ok, thank you so much for bearing with me for that. I know a lot of that at the beginning I shared with you last week and it's really thanks to that that I was able to articulate it to the congregation that morning. Really, it was overwhelming, we weren't expecting that many people to show because it's a big Friday morning and you expect to have a meal. You know Jews take it seriously, the bagels the lakhs, it's a real thing, and there was nothing. But we had hundreds of people there and it was really touching.

And so I wanted to share that with you, share all of it with you. It would have been the greatest blessing to have all of you there in person celebrating with us, but sharing with you like this was second best and you know I'd love to hear from you – questions, thoughts, anything you'd like to share. In the meantime, allow me to bless all of you with goodness and happiness and health and every good thing in the world. And to thank you, Jeremy for yielding so much of your Fellowship to me to share that speech with our beloved Fellowship family. And so, I hope it was worth it, I hope it was the right thing to do that I twisted your arm that way, I'll thank you. Thank you. Alright Jeremy, it's all yours.

Jeremy

It was totally worth it. All the thumbs are going up. It's as close as we can get to actually having the Fellowship in the synagogue with us, celebrating with you, that was just really beautiful. Even the second time I heard the speech. It was still really beautiful.

Alright, so I'm going to now shift gears. Because actually the last thing that Ari said was you know, may this time be something that's propelling us forward to a new era, toward building the beit hamikdash. And really what I have to say is there's something supernatural that's happening in Israel. And these miraculous occurrences are happening to individuals and obviously those moments are changing their lives. But now with the power of social media,

everyone has the chance to witness the miracles that are changing Israel and be changed alongside the nation as all of us are transforming.

So this story was reported on channel 14 by reporter named Eden Harel. She says like this, "There was an ultra-orthodox Haredi family and the mother was hospitalized and the 17-year-old son went to visit her. In the next room laid a wounded IDF soldier that was fighting in Gaza. The soldier saw the ultra-Orthodox guy and asked him, "Why don't you enlist in the army and take part in carrying the burden with the rest of the Jewish people?" So the Haredi boy said that he and his Haredi friends put a lot of effort in studying and praying for the success of the soldiers. He told about the efforts in the Yeshiva and he said that we study overtime. And he added that each Yeshiva boy has the name of a soldier that they have in mind to protect as they study and as they pray throughout the day.

And so the soldier sort of casually asked and said, "Well, what was the name of the soldier you were praying for?" And the wounded soldier couldn't believe it. The Yeshiva student said his name and the name of his mother. And the soldier was speechless. He said, "Wait, what were you doing two days ago at 5:00 in the afternoon while I was injured?" And the Yeshiva student said, "That was weird. At that time, I really didn't feel well. I had such a bad headache, I had to leave and rest." And at exactly at the moment when he was not learning Torah and not praying, that's when the injury happened.

And so, in order that there be no doubts, and the lesson be learned that our Torah study and our prayers are absolutely protecting the people of Israel, it just so happened, at the moment that the Yeshiva student stopped his holy service of learning and praying, that was the moment that the soldier was injured. And that soldier may have been killed. I mean every injury is like a few centimeters away from something actually taking you away from this world. And it is the Torah and the Tefillah and the achdut that our greatest protection. It's the Torah study and it's the prayer and it's our unity that each person on their level is doing what they're doing, thinking about the other, that is the bullet-proof vest.

And so when I tell you that a transformation is happening in Israel, it's like these stories just keep on coming out. And it's not just the secular Jews that are now seeking. But the ultra-Orthodox Jews are changing in Israel as well. A new unity is being born in Israel. And once Israel is united, no force in the world can come against us, no force in the world can defeat us.

And this is a video of an IDF soldier coming home to his house in B'nei Brak, one of the largest ultra-Orthodox cities in Israel. What you're about to see would never have happened five years ago. So get ready because the geulah is coming.



Those Jews, those children, that never would have happened a few years ago. But there is something that's happening right now in the Land of Israel and it's really undeniable.

And you know, you want to talk about spice carts. This week, everyone in Israel was reading the Torah portion of Yosef reuniting with his brothers. And finally Yosef finally reuniting with his father, Ya'acov. It's one of the most beautiful scenes in the entire Torah. Genesis chapter 46, verse 29:

So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; and he presented himself to him, and he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a lot.

-Genesis 21:10

And there's a famous midrash that says that when Ya'acov finally saw Yosef, he burst out crying, "Shema Yisrael, HaShem Eloheinu, HaShem Echad." Hear O Israel, HaShem is our God, HaShem is one."

And so many soldiers came home this weekend from Gaza after not seeing their families for 70 days. This video went so viral this week, you can't believe it.

(<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/c3uFnIHtCag>)

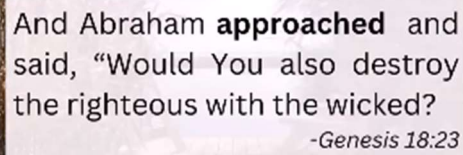


And so you just see the love and the spice-carts that these reunifications that are happening. Everyone in Israel is watching. But wait a minute, that soldier he doesn't look ultra-orthodox, but that father, he sure does. And the love that's between them, it's like something new is happening in Israel and it's really undeniable.

And where does that leave us? And that's for us that are in Israel, that are not fighting in Gaza. And that's really for us and everyone around the world that want to find their place in this unfolding destiny.

And this week's Torah portion, Vayigash, is really what defined Israel forever. It was the vayigash moment that when Judah stepped forward, when he approached, vayigash – the word means he approached or he stepped forward. That's when Judah became the leader of Israel. It was that vayigash moment that made him the tribe of the nation that will ultimately give birth to King David and ultimately be the father of Mashiach, the leader of Israel. And that moment also changed all of our prayers forever.

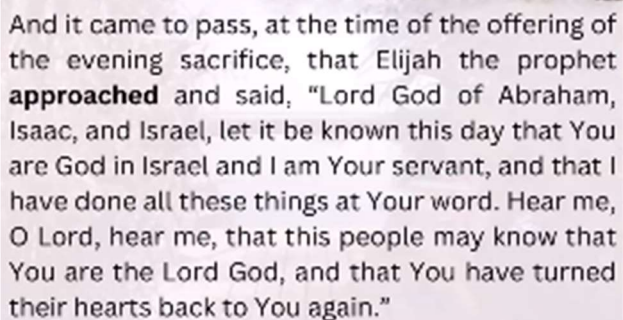
And this an idea that I learned from Efraim Goldberg more than ten years ago when I was invited to speak in his synagogue in Boca Raton. And he taught there are only three times in the Tanakh that the word vayigash is mentioned. And those three times represent the three steps that we take forward when we start our silent Amidah prayer to God. The first time is Abraham. And it says in chapter 18, verse 23:



And Abraham **approached** and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"
-Genesis 18:23

As Avraham approaches God to pray on behalf of Sdom, it says, vayigash Avraham. And so that was the first time where Avraham steps forward and approaches God in prayer.

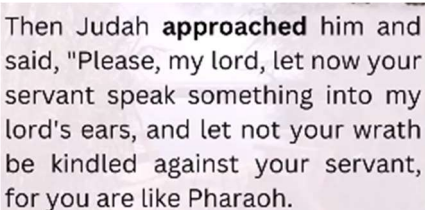
The second time it happens is in the book of Kings, in chapter 18 and that's the story of Elijah the prophet where he has the showdown with the priests of Ba'al:



And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet **approached** and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again."
-1 KINGS 18:36-37

And so that was the second time it was mentioned where really Eliyahu ha'navi, Elijah the prophet is praying on behalf of all of Israel that they finally return to God and they leave their idolatrous ways.

And the third time is of course this week's Torah portion, Genesis 44, verse 18:



Then Judah **approached** him and said, "Please, my lord, let now your servant speak something into my lord's ears, and let not your wrath be kindled against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh."
-Genesis 44:18

And so no one asked Judah to do that. No one asked Judah to step forward. He wasn't expected to step forward, he's not the oldest of all the sons, he could have just been quiet. But it was in that moment that he listened to his calling. He was being called and we are being called to step forward now.

But the calling is not a Torah command, it's not something you can find in a book. It is a thin silent voice. It's not a direct command. No one can care or blame you if you don't step forward. But now is the time that all of us need to ask ourselves. What can I do to bring more light into this world? How can I serve Israel in her time of need? How can I serve God now at the highest level possible? How can I step forward in my life?

That is the calling and every time that we take those three steps forward before the Amidah prayer, we think...Abraham, Elijah the prophet, and Judah. Each time we step forward, we think about people that were praying on behalf of other people, stepping forward on behalf of the other. When we enter into our own personal prayer, we take those three steps to remind us that we're not praying for ourselves, but we are stepping on behalf of all of Israel.

And so with that, I really want to bless everyone in our Fellowship that's here now, that's on live from all around the world. And everyone that's listening this download a little bit later, that HaShem give us all the courage and the strength and the wisdom to know how to step forward and the power to step forward in our lives, to serve our loved ones around us by being the leader that we need to be, setting an example of God's light and God's love in this world. And with that, I think that the Torah is speaking to us so powerfully now. That all of us need to find our vayigash and need to figure out how we can step forward. Because as you rise up and as you step forward, you are pulling everyone around you forward with you. Whether you're meaning to or not. When you step forward in the light, you're lighting up everyone around you.

And so, imagine, if everyone here just takes that step forward, takes that initiative, the impact, it's not just global in this Fellowship, but it multiplies by the thousands of people that are around us. And so, in these dark times, in these chaotic times, HaShem is calling on all of us to step forward, to legeshit, to really approach what needs to be approached and to do what needs to be done.

And so, with that, I want to bless all of us and then I have a surprise for you. So...

May you be blessed from Zion, from this place, from our hearts, anywhere that you are around the world.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

May HaShem bless you and guard you. May HaShem shine His countenance upon you and be gracious to you. May HaShem lift His countenance upon you and bless you with shalom.

Alright, so before we say goodbye, I have one more thing that I want to share with you. It feels very heavy on my heart, the situation in Israel, obviously. And there are still hostages that are being held by the Chamas. And I don't talk about them a lot because I want to win the war. I

think that that's the best way to release the hostages. And there's so many people that are using the hostages as a political pawn now to try to oust Netanyahu and there's so much going on, I just want to stay focused on the war.

And I just feel like in any other war, this fact alone would sway public opinion. There's a terror group that's holding innocent women and children and babies and people hostage? They haven't allowed the Red Cross to even see the hostages? How is the world silent right now? Or...worse...they're telling that Israel's response is not proportionate and Israel is in the wrong. It's insane.

And in some ways, the hostages should remain front and center in our motivation in this war. And as long as they are imprisoned, Israel must fight until victory. And what can we do? All of us who are not soldiers fighting in Gaza. What we can do, is we can pray. And it's hard to think about them because it's so painful. I mean there was like, one hostage, two hostages, there's more than a hundred hostages.



And so, in the little time that I've had in-between guard duty and in-between taking care of the family and the Fellowship and all that Ari and I are always doing, I got to the studio and I produced this song. And it's an old song and it's a song that Jews have sung for captives and Jews in distress and I just can't think of a more proper prayer than this one. And so I wanted to first share it here with the Fellowship before I release it. And then, I wanted to invite you, before I release it, that you'll see in the middle of the song, that I have a lot of children from Judea that I recorded

singing the second half of the prayer. And I wanted their young voices to kind of represent sort of the next generation, praying a pure prayer for the hostages. And if you want to take a picture or a video of your children or your grandchildren, maybe with a flag of where you are and send it to me, I'll try to add it to the video to sort of show that there are people all around the world that are supporting the soldiers in Israel and supporting their battle to defeat this evil and free our innocent hostages. So that is an invitation to the Fellowship. If you want to send me those videos and those pictures of your children, with those flags, I think that would be a beautiful addition.

But right now, Tabitha has put the music and she's just put the faces of the hostages that are still kept hostage right now. And I think that although it's so hard to look at their faces, I think it's a real service that we need to do. So thank you again, Tabitha, for that. And here it is. A song. There's Hebrew, there's English, and there's a transliteration of this old prayer. And I hope you enjoy it and I hope it brings us a little bit closer to each other and a little bit deeper into our hearts to really pray for those innocent people that are being held in the pits of hell by the most evil force today. So here you go. This song is called, "Acheinu," Our Brothers.



Our brothers and sisters, the whole House of Israel. We are the smallest of all nations, but we are the biggest family together. Our brothers and sisters, stolen away. We will never give up. United we pray. Locked away in the tunnels in the Land and in the sea, we will fight for you. We won't stop until you're free. And now we turn to heaven, we pray for you. We pray for mercy.

Thank you, my friends. I wanted to show you that and I think it's important that they don't just remain...oh there's hostages over there. But to see their faces and to know that they have families that are waiting for them to come home and just never have any doubt that Israel is the light fighting the darkness right now. We're just fighting the forces of evil in the world. And so, thank you for your prayers, thank you for your support, you are all such a source of blessing and support for us, beyond words, beyond what you think, beyond what you know. So thank you all, may HaShem bless you and I hope to see you again, soon! In the meantime, there's always WhatsApp's and emails and I always love hearing from you. So shalom my friends.