

Session 216

Yitro – Israel’s Wars & the Final Revelation

16 February 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MORrk04e2K4>

Jeremy

Baruch HaShem, thank you for allowing us to broadcast one more time. All right, so of course here’s Ari Abramowitz, this is Jeremy, we’re broadcasting together from the Arugot Farm and as you can tell, obviously, on the Arugot Farm and on the frontier in general, there are a lot of challenges and here we are live, just experiencing what that’s like. Now my little kids, when the power goes out in the middle of the night, it’s a little bit of a scary thing for them. And what I’ve learned, is that having children experience a little bit of fear isn’t a terrible thing because encountering what they fear creates more courage. And so, us encountering these technical difficulties, it’s just creating more perseverance and more love and more excitement for when we actually get to broadcast with all of you.

Because what it feels like to me in Israel is that we are quite literally in the center stage. A few days ago, drama unfolds. Trump calls to release all of the hostages or “hell will break loose.” Then Netanyahu comes and says, “Ah, just release three of them, we’ll be fine.” Egypt is amassing the largest army on Israel’s border since the 6 Day War, and now there’s talk about relocating the Gazans, and Mike Huckabee, the new ambassador to Israel, just said, “Well, if we’re really going to bring peace to the region, we really need to consider relocating the Arabs in Judea and Samaria as well. That will really bring lasting peace.”

Now just minutes before the power outage, minutes before our gathering, Netanyahu called a press conference with Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, and gave a new understanding to the hostage situation. Check what Netanyahu says here in this short clip:

Netanyahu



President Trump and I are working in full cooperation and coordination between us. We have a common strategy and we can’t always share the details of this strategy with the public. Including when the “gates of hell” will be open, as they surely will if all of our hostages are not released, until the one of them.

Jeremy

There are so many things that I love about that clip. First, that they're in total cooperation and coordination, Netanyahu and Trump. And also, that there is some sort of plan, and not just cowardice and fear that Netanyahu said, "First the three hostages, let's bring them back." Because I think that in his heart of hearts, he really feels responsible for those hostages and he will do what needs to be done to bring them back. And then, he said it himself, "Unleash hell on the Chamas."

And so, I don't know, "unleash hell" is becoming a little bit trite, but maybe there is really a plan. I know that big bombs, bigger bombs than Israel has ever had before are on their way to Israel from the Trump administration. And so, the cool, calm and collected Netanyahu said that Israel is going to unleash havoc on the Chamas. And every week, it feels like we're being surprised.

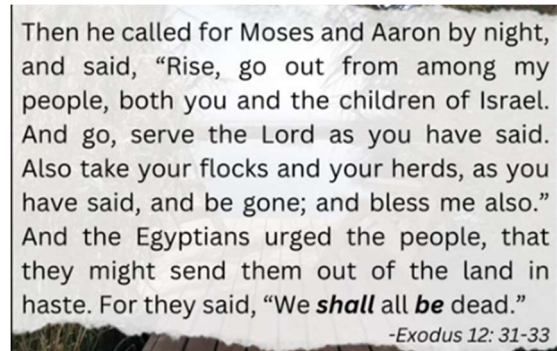
But our Fellowship has been through it all. It continues to grow, it continues to carry us forward. And I just read an article about our Fellowship over Shabbat. The article said that our Fellowship, we are the test case for the nation. We have actually become role models in Israel, and role models for the world. And I don't assume that everyone is going to join our Fellowship in the world, but like in this week's parsha, Yitro said, "We need many judges for the nation." We're making the first step of inspiring other Fellowships. Ten men from the nations will grab hold of the corner of a garment of a Judean man and say take us with you. We've heard that God is with you. So, perhaps that means that there will be many Fellowships with many leaders from the Land of Israel. But how awesome is it that we're the first model for the world, we're the first model in the Land of Israel, it's just something to be proud of. It's something to just celebrate that we are on the cutting edge, that we are pioneering this new path in the world. And it's like the first blossoms of the fulfillment of that prophecy in the end of days.

And in Israel, the end of days feels closer than ever. Trump is in power of the free world, Chamas and Chezbollah are on their last legs, the righteous among the nations are coming out of their shells and flourishing into a proper movement. And I feel like there has never been a more exciting time to be alive than right now. And so, with that, I want to kick off our Fellowship with a prayer.

HaShem, thank You for bringing us together from around the world, Master of the Universe, our Father in Shamayim. Please look at how far we've come. Our Fellowship is growing, our movement is gaining momentum, our family is reuniting. Please watch over us, watch over every member of this hand-picked Fellowship. All of us have chosen to walk the walk of Avraham, all of us have chosen to live a different life than the mainstream, all of us have chosen to walk in life, trying to hear Your Voice in our lives. Bless us as we strive to represent You in the world. Guide us on this narrow bridge of life, guard us from evil and from any harm. Bless everyone in this Fellowship, bless their families, bless their loved ones, help us continue on this journey of growth toward You

and journey toward the Land of Israel. Guide us to a New Jerusalem and Your House of Prayer for all Nations. Amen.

So, a lot of lessons are to be learned from the Torah, obviously. But when we were liberated from Egypt, we weren't really free yet. We weren't fully living a life of trust in HaShem. Actually, after the death of the firstborn, Pharaoh literally kicks us out. If you look at Exodus, chapter 12, verses 31 and 33, it reads like this:



They were so rushed out, that's where the story of the matzah comes from. But you see, that's not really free. The story of the exodus ends off with Egypt kicking us out. So our master told us to stay, we stayed. Our master told us to go, we went. That's not really free. We had done a lot. We sacrificed the god of Egypt, put his blood on our doorpost. But still we were under their rule. They told us...they kicked us out, so we left.

We had seen a lot, but we still needed to free ourselves from the mental and spiritual slavery.

And that only happened when we took decisive action and acted in faith until there was no way back. When our backs were up against the Red Sea, Israel marched directly into the sea. According to the Midrash, following the lead of the prince of the tribe of Judah, Nachon ben Haminadav, only then did the Sea split and Israel was freed and their oppressors were lost in the Red Sea as they crossed to the other side. It was as if our nation was born into the world at the Red Sea, like a birth canal of emunah.

So, you're only really able to be free when you live with emunah by literally jumping into the water and you can't turn back. Meaning for so many people, what does that mean? That actually means it's time to actually keep Shabbat. It means if you're working on Saturday, it's to turn and make it that you can't really come back anymore. You have to tell your boss, "Listen, Saturday is a holy day for me. It's in the Ten Commandments." And then, you do it. It's like, you have to make Aliyah. "But I don't have a job, but I don't have family." No, you have to just jump into the waters.

So, I wanted to explain something about jumping into the water, because that is how we have lived our lives. That's how we moved to the Arugot Farm, that's how my family, Tehila's family, that's how Ari made Aliyah, that's how Ari joined the army, just jumping into the water until there is no turning back. That's what was done with Fellowship in the Land of Israel Network this year. We just jumped into the water and we tried our best. We tried something new, we raised our production quality, we have now a studio in the Judean mountains, a new quality, a new studio, a new web site,

we started new partnerships with HaYovel and the Israel Guys. And our newest show, by the way has over 160,000 views just since Friday on YouTube. I mean we're making more of an impact now than ever before. And that's why our Fellowship and our network continued to grow.

And so, now, we're making communities within our community, a special one for women, led by our fearless leader, Tehila. So many people were asking for a women's class, for women by women, where the women could interact with Tehila, themselves, interact with each other, and so we are creating Women of Valor. And we've never done this before, we've never expanded our efforts, built out a network and reorganized our lives. And so far, we had to bring on business management team to give us brilliant business minds who were chosen for us, who chose to join us, to help us scale our work to reach more and more people and maximize our impact. Tehila and I and Ari, we're not business guys. We're rabbis, we're teachers, we're educators. Ari's a chicken farmer, I have a small flock of sheep, I'm a shepherd.

And so, they made their calculations and their analysis of the costs, and the time of production. But they didn't take into account that Fellowship members, they are our family. We're more than just a movement, we're more than just a membership of a network, we are quite literally family. We've been through so much together. And so, many people were asking to join the Women of Valor, but the price was beyond the reach that was tailored for non-Fellowship members to bring more people into our movement. And so, I want to say, "All of our Fellowship members, of course, you'll get a massive, unparalleled discount. No Fellowship member will be left behind." We just jumped into the water, we've never done this before. And since we're getting going, we just need to recalibrate, adjust and keep going.

Tehila has a whole world of things going on between the kids and her work and the Farm. She had no idea about the accounting side of things. She just wanted to offer an opportunity to be a part of a women's community, based around learning the Bible together. And when she found out that there were people from our Fellowship family that were feeling like it was out of reach, she was so upset, she literally didn't sleep the entire night and she just won't have any of that. So Tabitha in the next while, the next day or two, is going to be sending out an email to all of the women in the Fellowship. A VIP personal invitation, making a special offer for any member who can't afford, who can't pay, only for our Fellowship members to join.

And the prophets of Israel say that women are going to save the world and bring the final redemption. And this is one step, bringing real women of valor together and we're not planning on missing any of you. None of our Fellowship will be left behind, no matter what. That is our commitment. And so, with that, I want to bring the other fearless leader of our Fellowship who is

just out of Reserve Duty, fighting the electrical outages here on the frontier. Of course I'm talking about our dear friend, Ari Abramowitz. And here he is.

Ari

Hello, hello, good to see all of you, shalom, shalom. Shalom everybody, good to see all of you. I'm glad Jeremy got to clarify all of that. I know that you know this, but I think of all of you very frequently. I carry you with me, not only because you're my beloved friends and even very much family to me, but because in my heart, you are living manifestations of the redemptive times that we're living in. And it isn't a secret that I'm more than a little bit redemption obsessed. Meaning that I walk around feeling various levels of how impending the redemption is. But it only really varies between believing that we're on the precipice historically, meaning that it will happen, maximum in the next year or two, that's the furthest. Versus feeling like it's absolutely impending with great immediacy and will happen any time now, even today. Like when the electricity went out, I was like...maybe this is it! It's happening.

Because you know, I look at the world and it's all happening now, at least in my eyes, this Fellowship is a part of a historic shift towards redemption for reasons that we've spoken about. I won't go into all of the prophecies. I know that Jeremy just mentioned one, but perhaps the greatest among them is the inexplicable love between us here in this Fellowship. As we're from different countries, different cultures, different lands, different religions. And despite all of these significant differences, there is just so much love. And that is one of the central themes that I saw in this week's Torah portion. Love, love.

Rav Yonatan Sapir, he shares a beautiful teaching regarding the giving of the Torah. Because we so often focus on the drama and the magnitude of the miracle of the actual giving of the Torah, itself. Mt. Sinai shook to its foundations as smoke rose up from the mountain with thunder and lightning and the sounds of shofar, bellowing forth. It was just so dramatic that sometimes we forget to take a moment and remember what just happened immediately preceding it. What led up to it? What happened?

Well, HaShem tells Moshe to give the nation an inspirational, preparatory, pre-game speech. Chapter 19, He instructs Moshe to tell the nation:

'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me. Now then, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel."

-Exodus 19:4-6

Now the great commentator, Rashi, explains like this, so beautiful. He says:

As an eagle which bears its children upon its wings. Scripture uses this metaphor because all other birds place their young between their feet since they are afraid of another bird that flies above them, but the eagle fears none except man – apprehending that perhaps he may cast an arrow at it – since no bird can fly above it; therefore he places it (its young) upon its wings, saying, "Better that the arrow should pierce me than my young!"

-Rashi on Exodus 19:4

Meaning that HaShem loves us in the way that a mother eagle loves her young. By protecting her young with her very own body. That a hunter's arrow should sooner pierce her own self, her own body than harm her children. HaShem is telling us that that is the way HaShem loves us. That's what He's telling us.

And why is God telling us this right now before the giving of the Torah? So we all know that the entire basis of His giving us the Torah is founded upon His indescribable love for us. This is not about authoritarian control, no. That is more Islamo Fascism. That's not what this is about. This is about love. The entire transmission of the Torah from God to Israel is all about love.

That's why Rav Sapir explains the sages speak in great depth about Mt. Sinai being like a chupah, a chupah. Who here knows what a chupah is? Right? You've been to a Jewish wedding before? It's a marriage canopy. Mt. Sinai was like a chupah between the nation of Israel and the God of Israel because we're forging an unbreakable covenant of love and intimacy with HaShem. And there's an exclusivity there.

The very word that's defined as a treasured people, an am segulah (אִמְ סִגְלָה), comes from the concept of a loving, exclusivity that's not meant to be shared. Like a marriage between a husband and a wife, it's precious and treasure. It's not meant to be violated or transgressed. And while God loves all of mankind, all of His children, there is an element of exclusivity with His am segulah of Israel.

And that, Rav Sapir explains, is how the Ramban describes redemption. Redemption, right? As the return to one's true place. That's what redemption is. Now when the Temple is built and God's

Presence dwells within the nation of Israel, when God's Presence is amongst us, when it's within us, that is redemption. That's as things are meant to be, that is the true place. It's only when His Presence is amongst us that we can channel that light to the entire world. Redemption is the opposite of loneliness, fear, and isolation. Redemption is the experiential knowledge of being exactly where we're supposed to be.

Now my words, I think, may be resonating with some of you in this Fellowship because over the years, so many of you have reached out to me and told me how you feel isolated and alone on your spiritual journeys. If you have felt that way on your spiritual journey, raise your hand. At some point on your journey. Wow, that's ok. That's our Fellowship. There have been people who have contacted me, reached out to me, this week about feeling exactly that way, and you know who you are. It's definitely amongst the most frequent feelings that are shared with me. And as a matter of fact, it's an existential feeling that led many of you, if not all of you to being a part of this Fellowship to begin with. At least from the non-Jews. Jews, I think have a whole different reason that sort of brings us together. Maybe a little bit of that feeling of not finding our place either.

And so, really however painful that feeling of isolation and alienation may be, it's actually a blessing because it has led us to each other. It was that pain and isolation that is leading us to a higher dimension of love and unity and understanding than we could have possibly conceived before. And that is also what happened at Mt. Sinai among the nation of Israel. We know that there was a lot of conflict among the camp of the Israelites. I mean, it's Israelites, it's Jews. I mean, a lot of conflict. Moshe was sitting and judging the conflicts among the people from morning till night. There was so much conflict that Jethro, himself, told Moses that he needed to delegate and set up a system that he couldn't possibly resolve all the conflict on his own. But despite all of that conflict, the Torah tells us that:

“And Israel encamped there before the mountain.”
-Exodus 19:2

The Hebrew word for encamped, *v'yachan* (וַיַּחֲנֶה), is in singular. Teaching that Israel only merited to receive the Torah because they stood at Sinai as one person with one heart. Now what brought the nation together at Mt. Sinai is the exact thing that is bringing all of us together in this

Fellowship. God. The Torah. Truth. A truth that is so powerful and overwhelming that it transcends the very real things that we still don't agree on. And there's a lot of things that we don't agree on. If we tried to drill down and just have Fellowships about what we don't agree on, there's a lot of it. But we don't even need to know how those differences will get reconciled because it doesn't really matter. Because the truth of God's oneness is so much greater than our own intellect, or anything it is that divides us.

And that by the way, is what made Yitro, Jethro different. The Torah tells us that Yitro heard about the great miracles that God did for Israel and here's what it says, chapter 18:

Jethro priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard all that God had done for Moses and for Israel, God's people, how Hashem had brought Israel out of Egypt.

-Exodus 18:1

So Rav Kahana teaches that hearing isn't just about listening, hearing with your ears. It's about responding. I mean think about it. Yitro wasn't alone. The entire world heard about what God did for Israel, but only Yitro answered the calling and came. It's the same today. The whole world is seeing with their eyes the miracle of Israel, the ingathering of the exiles, the revival of the Hebrew language, the blossoming of the desolate wilderness that the prophets foretold. The whole world is seeing our war against the forces of evil and darkness. But it's only a very small remnant, righteous few that are actually answering that calling and coming home, and coming to us, and joining Israel – physically, spiritually, that are coming and joining us in our journey that we're not alone.

And really, like the prophet said, when you cast your lot with Israel and the Jewish people, you become a part. It's like a joining, a joining. That is what redemption is, and that is ultimately why I believe that this Fellowship is a part of it. And so, my dear friends, as we close our time together today, I hand you back to Jeremy, I want to bless each and every one of you with the clarity, the strength and the courage to continue answering the call. May HaShem fill your hearts with the deep knowledge that you're exactly where you're meant to be right now. And may you feel His boundless love and protection as an eagle shields its young. May we continue to stand together as one, united in love and in truth in the unfolding redemption in our time. And may we soon see the full revelation of HaShem's Presence among us, bringing peace, joy and light to all of Israel and the entire world. Amen.

Thank you for your patience, Jeremy. Back to you.

Jeremy

Amen. That was truly beautiful, ok. All right. Can everyone hear me now? That's the question. Yes? Excellent. So, there are so many lessons in this week's Torah portion. It is the climax of the entire Torah. Everything has been building up to this Sinai moment and everything that happens after is an effect, to this primal cause. And so, this is really like...this is the essence. So in this parsha, we see keys to revelation, to living as a believer in the world. And the secret to Israel's chosenness, so much is revealed to us in this week's Torah portion.

And so what I want to talk to you about now, I guess Ari started with. And he talked about Yitro listening or hearing. But the English version doesn't really explain that. Meaning, let me say something. In Exodus chapter 17, verse 14:

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this **for** a memorial in the book and recount **it** in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

-Exodus 17:14

Meaning, Jethro heard that Israel was liberated from the mightiest empire in the world. But he also heard about this war with Amalek. And it seems as that is a blueprint for revelation. That before revelation, we had to encounter evil. I mean, the evil of the Nazis was before the state of Israel. October 7th was before this stage of history that we're entering in right now. We have a mission that is first and foremost to rid the world of evil, to have a revelation of God. And you have to first encounter the opposite of God's heart.

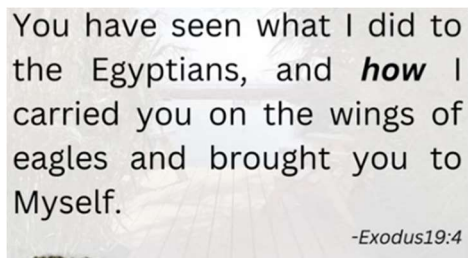
And that's one of the things that Jethro saw and said, "Wow, they've defeated the mightiest empire and Amalek, who is manifest evil." When you see evil, you feel it, you know it, you don't need to philosophize about it. You don't need to logically argue. It's evil, you know it. It's not something that you need to believe in. When you see it, you feel it, you know it. If there is evil, Auschwitz, Nazis, Chamas, at the peace and Nova music festival. It's just evil. And if there is an evil, there must be the opposite of evil. There must be good.

And the modern world is no different than the pagan world of old. They preach there is no good, there no evil, there are many gods with many truths, each person has their own narrative. But when you encounter evil, when you encounter Amalek, the truth is revealed. And that is the first revelation, the first step to revelation. Meaning there is a reason why good and God are almost the same word in English, in German, in Dutch. Good and God are the same because once you recognize evil, you can immediately say, "Well, the opposite of whatever happened there, the opposite of that is good." Now you have good and evil. If you have good and evil, then you have one God.

And our mandate to enter into a new world, to enter into a new era, our mandate is to remove evil from the world. And so, in order to receive the revelation at Sinai, we had to encounter Amalek. Yitro had to see that evil attacks Israel. It's amazing that whenever evil arises in the world, it attacks the Jews first. The Nazis rose to power. Immediately they began annihilating the Jewish people. It got to 9/11, it got to Pearl Harbor, excuse me. The jihad was the same. Immediately they started attacking the Jews, the Chamas. Yes, 9/11 happened, but it was first attacking Israel. First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people.

And so, in order for us to have a revelation of truth, for us to realize that God truly runs the world, we have to first have an encounter with evil and really understand that the first biblical map of redemption is the redemption from Egypt, IS the revelation at Sinai. All of that isn't just a story of our history, it is a blueprint. The sages of Israel say it is the map of our final redemption. And so, it's very clear that our redemption will not come easy. There are a lot of fantasies about redemption. Some people think that 770 in Brooklyn is going to be picked up and flown over to Israel. The Messiah is going to come and everything is going to be happy days.

But when you really see the redemption process in the Torah, it sounds wonderful, but in that wondrous testimony, you can see that there's a lot more than meets the eye. I'm going to quote what Ari just quoted earlier. Exodus chapter 19, verse 4. Listen how God describes our journey:



You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and **how** I carried you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Myself.

-Exodus19:4

So on one hand, sound like, wow! We were like air-lifted on First Class El Al. Comfortable seats, on the wings of eagles. But in reality, it was really hard. Israelites were chased to a dead-end at the Red Sea, with the Egyptian army after them with no where to run and no where to hide. They went days without water, they were attacked by the forces of evil in a

war against Amalek. That's hardly First Class with eagle's wings.

I mean, we were carried on the wings of eagles THROUGH the challenges of this world. The challenges of this world are a part of the redemption process. So when we see the hard times that Israel's going through, struggling with hostages, struggling with the evil Amalek of the Chamas, that is all a part of the process. The challenges shouldn't weaken our faith. On the contrary. Israel also went through challenges, even though they're being described as being carried on First Class on eagle's wings. Israel endured so much in their time in the desert.

And the challenges of this world, at least what I'm starting to realize, is they don't only mold us into who we are. But they also define us. Being a good friend when times are good and being a good friend when times are really tough is not the same thing. Marriage on vacation and marriage through crisis, the love actually grows through the crisis. I mean, eight months ago, I had a really bad horse accident. I was thrown off a horse, I broke my leg, the horse tumbled on me, I cracked my head open on a rock, lost consciousness and I had to be flown out on a helicopter, or else the medics said I wasn't going to make it. And that was the least of it. It took me months to recover. And there is about a month, maybe two months of my life that I hardly remember it. It's as if I was in a coma. It's just been deleted from my memory, I just don't remember.

And it was hard and painful and it's been a long road to recovery. Surgeries and stitches and physical therapy, my brain needed to come back to life and to come back to itself. But what I realize now more than anything, is that it wasn't that hard for me. It was really hard for Tehila. I mean, she had a husband that was knocked out in bed, not really a friend because I could barely talk, more than a patient. I became a patient that she attended to. She took care of the home, the kids, the Farm, the guests, she helped the Fellowship, she worked so hard every day. Without that, I could never have appreciated who Tehila is. How kind she was to me, what a great mother she was. Had we not gone through that crisis together, I wouldn't have ever really known.

But I can wholeheartedly say that my love for Tehila has grown because the hard times not only made us who we are, but it gave me the opportunity to witness her greatness. Watching her go beyond the normal, beyond the exceptional, to be so loyal, to be so loving, so dedicated, so committed. I mean I never would have known like I know because I never would have seen it. And so, all of the challenge that we go through, it's like we can know because we see it. That's what it means to be carried on the wings of eagles. It doesn't mean First Class with a comfy seat. It means that a life of emunah is a life lived with faith that carries you to new heights. And the hardships and challenges, they're catapults, carrying us to new levels of consciousness and new levels of beings. New levels of living.

And without that understanding, revelation is impossible because revelation comes through the hardships. That's when truth is revealed. You only know how strong you are until you're pushed all the way to the limits, and then a little bit farther just so you know how strong you really are. That's when you can see it. That's when God can see it. That's when the whole world can see it. That's when you know. You don't need to believe because you've experienced it. And the challenge that this world is that in order to know it, you have to experience.

And so, next lesson, is the most famous idolator in the Torah, Jethro. The name of an idolatrous priest from Midian is the name of the portion we receive the Ten Commandments and the greatest national revelation in the history of the world. And it was named after this non-Jewish idolatrous priest. What is going on there? So, in Exodus chapter 18, verse 1, I want to just point out the Hebrew. Because in English it says:

And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, **heard** of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people—that the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.
-Exodus18:1

But in Hebrew, the first word of the parsha is v'yishma (וַיִּשְׁמָע) is "and he heard, Jethro the priest of Midian, all that had done." The first word is hear, just like the Shema. Hear O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is One. Jethro heard something, this priest, and he heard just like what Ari said. The whole world knew what happened to Israel.

Egypt was the mightiest empire in the world at that time and their slaves crushed them. Liberated themselves and freed themselves. It was the talk of the time. How did the Israelites free themselves from slavery? But somehow, when Yitro heard it, it was more than just listening to the news. That listening became a calling. And in life, everyone hears everything. No one doesn't know about what's happening in the world today. But there are some people that hear it, and there are others, it becomes a calling in their lives. Everyone knows that there are Ten Commandments. Some people can read the 4th commandment and let's read it together. Exodus chapter 20, verses 8 through 11.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the Lord your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. For *in* six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.
-Exodus 20: 8-11

For some people they hear that in the Ten Commandments. And they're able to just kind of go to church on Sunday, keep on moving on with their life. But for some people, it becomes a calling. What they do with that knowledge that the 7th day, Saturday, is holy. I mean, they grew up in Germany and the stores in Germany are all closed on Sunday because Sunday is the German Sabbath.

The entire Torah, the revelation itself is guiding us to that understanding of Yitro. That the purpose, the mission statement, is that we can live a guided life. We can live in a relationship with God that will show you things. That you will hear things, send you messages to hear. And then, the question is, will you hear it as a calling in your life? Yitro did and forever now the Torah was given in his name as an everlasting monument to a non-Jew that looked around and heard. And what happened, is that he took decisive action and decided to join Israel.

And then, before Israel receives the Torah, they're given a mandate, they're given a mission statement. Cause we're given such fundamental principles here about how to live with revelation in our life. And here we see, Exodus chapter 19, verses 5 and 6:

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.
-Exodus 19:5-6

you serve." And that is what real leadership is.

So, I want to understand what that means. An am Cohanim, a kingdom of priests. So the Iben Ezra and the Ramban, they say what that's really saying is that we'll be a nation of servants. That our goal in life is to serve others. Meaning Ari taught me one time that I think his grandfather used to say, "It doesn't matter how many servants you have. What matters is how many people

And so the Iben Ezra and Nachmanides, they say, “No, when God is calling us a nation of priests, it’s really a nation of servants.” Rashi says Cohanim, priests, actually means princes. It’s a nation of royalty, a nation under the King of Kings. If we are the children of God, we are priests, that is like calling us royalty.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the former chief rabbi of England said, “Now the priestly class of every nation, they all knew how to read, and they all knew how to write. We are going to be a nation of the education, of educators. A nation who can all read and write like every priest. It won’t just be a class of priests. It will be a nation of priests that are able to learn.”

But then the Sforno says that what I believe is the most beautiful and the most aligned with prophecy. The Sforno in the 1400’s gave this idea which to me seems to be the most obvious of all ideas, is that Israel is the priest to the nation the way that the priests are the priests within Israel. And so what do the priests do to the Israelites? They’re meant to bless the nation and teach the nation. Israel as priests to the nation are called quite literally to bless and teach the nations the ways of God. And that’s what it’s all about. That’s what the final redemption is all about. When you think about Exodus chapter 24, towards the very end, it says:

[Moses] took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people.

-Exodus 24:7

The first and only nation to receive its laws before its land. A law that could be read, packed up, transported, was the expression of God everywhere, without anything to do with any land. That’s how Israel survived 2,000 years of exile. No land, no common culture, no common language, they had one Torah that bound them in eternity.

All other nations became a nation because they had lived together for a long time in a territory that they saw as their home. Maybe it was a coup, a war, eventually people who lived together created some form of government to rule over them.

Only Israel became a nation, received its constitution, the Torah, before entering to settle the Land. Israel is called to be a republic of faith under the sovereignty of God. But also, the Torah was given on the way to the Land, to teach the laws of holiness, the rules of engagement in war. It was a Torah given for the Land of Israel and any other Torah is by definition distorted. Torat Eretz Yisrael is the Torah for the Land of Israel, in the Land of Israel.

And all of us have been brought up on the Torah of the exile. So much of Judaism was formulated in the Babylonian Talmud, in Babylon. So the ultimate vision of the Messianic era gives us a vision that’s at the very beginning of the book of Isaiah, chapter 2, verses 3 and 4:

Many people shall come and say,
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of
the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths."
For out of Zion shall go the Torah will go
forth,
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

-Isaiah 2:3-4

You see, only in the Land can we serve as an am Cohanim, as a nation of priests, to welcome the nations, to be a goy kadosh, to be a holy nation. Only in the Land can the Torah truly be taught. Any Torah originating outside of the Land of Israel, with the exile and the influence of the nations around them, it's just not the Torah of Israel.

And so, the last thing that we're called, is to be a holy nation, a goy kadosh. And there's only two things in the Torah that are called holy. One, is Shabbat, that's holiness in time. And the second, is the Holy of Holies in the Temple, itself. That's holiness in space. So there's holiness in time and there's holiness in space and there's also the nation of Israel. And somehow, we have a collective fate and destiny that will constitute the most compelling evidence of God's involvement in history. That's our holiness. Because holiness is the window into the Divine.

And from its highs in Israel to its lows in the exile, to our return to the Land of Israel, it will have no counterpart among any of the other nations. Even though we lost our Land and our sovereignty and against all laws of the natural order, we never ceased being a nation. Holy is a window into the Divine and holiness is always pointing to something beyond itself. Something beyond toward God. And so, Israel is holiness. Holiness is the access point to God that is beyond this world, a taste of something supernatural. The natural order of this world, somehow when it comes to Israel, every time someone looks to the Jewish return to the Land of Israel, to a people scattered and hopeless, who have suffered a Holocaust only 80 years ago and now they're watching the rise, and the struggle of Israel, it is a window into the supernatural. It's an invitation to join those eagle's wings. A nation that has broken all of the laws of nature and are different than any other nation.

You know, Israel is the only thing in the world that you can open up the Bible, you can read the verses, look up, point your finger at it and say that the Bible is true. God is true. God is alive, I can see it with my own eyes. Israel is the greatest witness and that's what it means to be holy.

And so, if I had to sum up today's Fellowship, these are the foundational lessons that were taught to us in the parsha, Yitro. Freedom before Sinai was really only achieved when we had complete faith and we acted with loyalty to the point that there was no return. Jumping into the waters IS the only way to experience freedom and trust in God. The final redemption that we're experiencing right now, just like the first redemption will not be an easy ride. It will be on the wings of eagles, through the challenges of life. And for us to always keep our ears open, just like the shema, that when we hear something that touches our hearts, open our hearts that that hearing should

become a calling. That one day Israel will be a nation of priests to literally be a light to other nations and to be a holy nation. That's our mandate. All of us, to live a guided life, to live as servants, as priests, as princes, as children of the King.

Why? To be a holy nation because this Fellowship is holy. We are the first living witness. All of us coming together in an inexplicable way, from 50 countries around the world – monks, and nuns, and Jews and Christians and Noachides, and Hebrew Roots. Believers in God and lovers of Israel from around the world. A remnant, the righteous among the nations. How awesome to be chosen to be holy and to be a part of a movement that points to something beyond us, that points to the King of Kings Who moves all things.

And so, with that, I want to bless everyone here that reflects God's light to everyone around them. You have been hand-picked for these times. And I'm just so happy that all of us are walking on this faith journey together, all the way to Jerusalem. And so with that, I want to bless you as a nation of priests with the Priestly Blessing:

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

Shalom my friends, I'll see you again soon. I hope to be in touch, it's been a blessing as always, with all the challenges and the power outages. We pulled it off again. So it's great to see you, thank you so much, shalom.

