

Session 37

Mishpatim – Teaching us to Think, Teaching us to Live

14 February 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ix8d-MPfam0>

Welcome to the Land of Israel fellowship. I can't believe it, for some reason the music, for the second time now, it's not working. I don't know why that's happening. That's ok. Baruch Hashem, we're together from all over the world. I'm so happy to see you all. I like that song a lot. I really wanted to share it with you. But Baruch Hashem, here we are now, together again. To me, it feels like I am one of the luckiest people on earth. We're just so lucky to be building this fellowship together. New friends ...long lost friends have joined from around the world and we're all coming together now. I just want to welcome all of the new members that are here. You've joined the most beautiful, diverse communities of believers that I've ever encountered. And we're just so fortunate to have been brought together in this amazing way in these historic times. It's like in a world gone mad, in a world coping with a virus and sickness, it's so good to gather, to realign ourselves, to bring some light and healing into our lives. So let's take a moment and bring our worlds together from around the world and pray together.

So Hashem, our Heavenly Father, You've given us this life, such a gift, but it's complicated here on earth. We can't navigate this journey without You. We come here every Sunday and more and more keep on gathering. We're here to hear from You. To open our hearts to the message that You have. We're here to take the next step to get our lives in order and amidst all this chaos around us, create order in our minds, in our hearts, in our lives, in our homes. Thank You for always blessing our gatherings and allowing us to find meaning and direction for us and in Your Word every week. Give us the grace that we need to just do what we need to do. To just do it. Bless every family in this fellowship. They are beyond a blessing to us, to Israel, to this Land that's Your promise. Bless them and guide them. That is why we are here. To find guidance from You in our lives. And so our fellowship all across the world says together – Amen.

So here we are. The land of Israel fellowship and I just want to start today with sharing two stories that are unfolding in the Land of Israel right now that are so important that you know, they're not making international headlines. It's just sort of happening and if you don't have the eyes to see it or even the news and the information because everything is blocked and censored and some things get out and some things don't. It's just very good to keep our focus and attention aligned with Hashem's attention so to speak. To keep our eyes on what His Eyes are on. I think that makes the Torah that we learn more complete, more whole and so two things happened. And both of them are totally different, but in some ways, in their core spiritually, they're exactly the same.

And the first was the international criminal court in Europe. Just last week they claimed, and I'm quoting from a Reuter's article, that Israel is guilty of committing war crimes. You know Arabs living anywhere else anywhere in the Land of Israel, in Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem, East Jerusalem, have a better standard of living, a longer lifespan, a higher education, than almost any Arab anywhere else in all of the Middle East. It's like war crimes...are they insane? The IDF is the greatest moral force in the world today. And here's what's happening.

So everyone knows that in the past, during our exile, it was better for Jews to live under Muslim rule than under the Catholic rule of Europe. Now if you really let that sink in, the Muslim world many, many centuries ago, was as hostile, if not more hostile than like the ISIS-like realities that we live in today. And that's just horrifying to think about. That the Jews would have preferred to live under the Muslim rule than under the Catholic European rule. There were blood libels that were spread about Jews in Europe. They sparked pogroms and massacres and countless Jews were killed and hatred for the Jews was fueled by lies. Like Jews are killing Christian babies and drinking their blood in the four cups of wine during Passover and making matzah out of the blood of babies on Passover.

And you know the first ritual murder charge of a blood libel took place in Norwich, England in the 12th century. A boy named William was found dead in the woods outside of a town and a catholic monk named Thomas Monmouth accused local Jews of torturing him and murdering him to mock Christianity. And then through the church and through the European political systems, the myth began to spread to people all across Europe. And the libel was each year, Jewish leaders around the world, they meet to choose a country and a town from which a Christian would be apprehended and murdered. And the most heinous and outrageous lies, like countless times, when a child would go missing in Europe, Jews were tortured and blamed.

And this last week, you know the political elite of Europe, they gathered together once again, this time in the international criminal court in Hague and have decided once again to stain the image and reputation of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. It's like you think about the blood libels, oh, it's just the peasants of Europe were like that. No, it started in the church, in the institutions, in the justice system. It was the same political elites then. It's the same political elites now. And maybe now it's less vulgar, maybe it looks more civilized, but in essence, nothing has changed. It's the same kind of lies. It's the same hatred of Israel.

And there are regimes in the Middle East that are tyrannical dictators, where Jews and Christians have no human rights. In Syria, Assad has been gassing his own people. The international criminal court, they don't say a thing and to focus on the one democracy, on the one country where Jews and Christians and Muslims live as equals, it's just blatant Jew hatred, or more exactly like God hatred and you know, can we get the Reuter's headline up here on the screen?

International Criminal Court says it has jurisdiction in Palestinian territories

It's like this is the picture from Reuters. And like if you read it, it's like what is the heart of the claim here? The heart of the claim here is that Jews, we don't even have a right to live in Judea. They don't call the Land Judea, it's not even disputed territories. They don't even call it the West Bank anymore. It's Palestinian territories. They've made the decision that Judea is now the Palestinian territories, thank you very much.

And you know, it's like the reason Germans are called Germans is because they're from Germany. And the reason why Japanese are called Japanese, is because they're from Japan. Why are Jews called Jews? We all know this. Because we're from Judea, the mountains of Judea, the Judean desert. It's like Judea birthed our identity as Jews. This Land gave us our identity and these European elites want to erase that from the world? It's like as far as the most modern and enlightened people are concerned, there's no history, there's no truth. The Bible is meaningless and God is irrelevant. And at this point in history, I'm just confident and just waiting for judgment. Fine, Europe. Attack Israel, this generation. Attack the greatest source of light in the world and let's see where that path takes you. And so, that's what's happening outside of Israel.

And at the same time, inside Israel, almost like some sort of spiritual coordination, the Palestinian Authority, which is of course funded by the same European countries, started to destroy maybe the oldest archaeological site in all of Israel. They started to destroy the altar of Joshua on Mount Eval. You know in the book of Deuteronomy, the people of Israel, they're commanded to go into the Land to go into Shechem and towering above the city of Shechem, the place where God first promised the Land of Israel to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There are two mountains, Mount Eval and Mount Gerizim. The Mountain of Blessing and the Mountain of Cursing. And Joshua, as the leader of Israel who led us into the Land was commanded to build an altar on Mount Eval.

Decades ago, an archaeologist named Adam Zartal uncovered the massive altar of Joshua on Mount Eval. It's like 3,000 years old archaeology in the Land of Israel. It's older than the city of David or any findings in Jerusalem. We're not talking about King David, it's like the exodus of Egypt. Forty years later, we come into the land and you actually see the altar that Joshua built.

And last week, huge tractors came in and started destroying the altar, turning its ancient stones into gravel for a road. You wouldn't believe it if you couldn't see it.

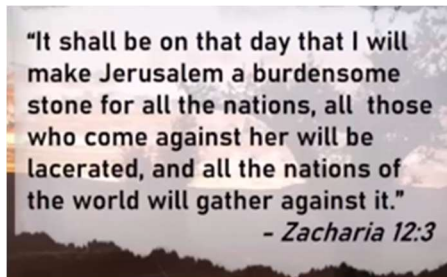


A history 3,000 years old, and if you didn't understand the Hebrew subtitles, or the Arabic language, what he pretty much said is, we're taking these stones and we are grinding it into gravel to make a road. Making rubble of Jewish history. I mean, that site, there's no price tag you could put on Joshua's altar. It's like there is no price. It is beyond believable that Israel would allow such a thing to happen. And at the same time, like erasing our history, it's like the forces of darkness are trying to erase Israel's history. Trying as hard as they can to disprove the Bible, to erase the authentication of the Bible – literally turning our history into gravel. It's like to be able to visit the Mount of Blessings and to visit Joshua's altar, to see the altar, like what a privilege and blessing for every believer around the world. To see the Bible come to life in three dimensions to live in 2021 and go back 3,000 years and see how it's all interconnected. The promises and the covenant that was made there. To be a believer today and stand there and witness that promise come to pass. That's why the Jewish people are in this Land, to be custodians and stewards to protect these places for the people who can't possibly appreciate them.

You know, that story didn't make Fox news or CNN. But God's eyes are on the Land of Israel. And now, so are the eyes of our fellowship. We love what He loves and the Bible is the unfolding story in the history of God's relationship with this world and these dark forces are at war with truth itself. Trying to erase history, trying to erase the Bible. It's like there's so many problems in the world, what are these Europeans doing passing judgments against Israel now? Funding the Palestinian Authority still? Can't they fund their own poor people that have lost their jobs because of corona? It's just like, it's as if Trump left office and they smelled the weakness and the enemies of Israel started to rear their ugly heads again. It's like, doesn't Europe have something better to do with their time? It's like the hatred is uncontrollable. It's like the resurrection of the blood libels in the International Criminal Court.

It's like war against Israel is the war against the absolute. If they can erase history, if they can erase Israel, if they can erase the Bible, they can erase God. That's their plan. And then Europe can become pagan Vikings, with no moral code, no conscious, and they can be their own gods!

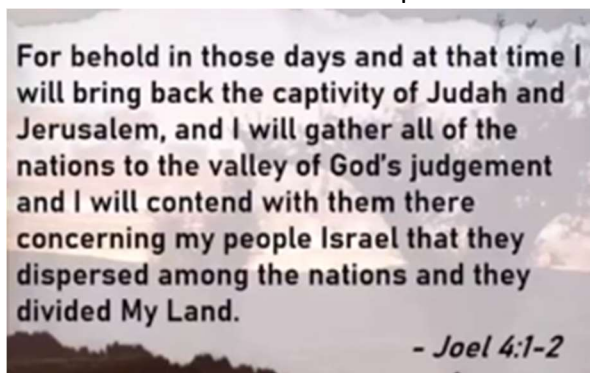
How amazing that the first story of the Bible, the snake in the Garden of Eden tells us that the ultimate temptation of man to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil will be to become gods themselves. And like what's stopping them? Israel. They can't help it. We are the testimony that God runs the world. Look at Zechariah 12:



Now, this is a famous end of days prophecy, but I want you to think about the improbability of Zechariah writing that. Judea, I mean what was a tiny little province in the middle of like the world. Jerusalem was a city in ruins being built by Ezra and Nehemiah. Who cared really about Israel in the time of Zechariah? This tiny little country, the audacity that Zechariah said, no, no, no. The United Nations of the world are going to see Israel as a burden and the nations are going to come together and attack her in every way that they can. Who would have believed such a thing? How would all of the nations in the time of Zechariah even come together. Like what, with pigeons and horses and sending messages? Like how could that even come to pass?

And lo and behold, look at that in the time of Zechariah, the prophecy doesn't make any logical sense and as the international court of the nations comes together to try to delegitimize Israel and carve up the Land of Israel, say no, no, that's Palestinian territory. Take Judea and Samaria away from the Jews.

Look at the book of Joel in chapter 4:



Joel, what are you talking about? Sometime, the end of days, that Judah and Jerusalem be back and the nations are going to come and they're going to try to divide the Land? Like Israel is so small. Divide what? And we're literally living through those days and what's going to happen? There's going to be a valley of judgment for those nations. Israel is no longer the broken scattered people anymore. Like a new era is upon us and watch what's going to happen. Out of this corona chaos, Israel is going to emerge, a society that will light up the whole world as societies themselves are almost at civil war with each other. In a lot of countries. Israel is becoming more and more together. More and more solidified. Stronger and stronger. We're showing the world what it is to love your neighbor as yourself. Like something is happening in the world. God is moving and there's a clear direction.

The people of Israel continue to be ingathered from the exile. They're coming back to the Land of Israel. This year, on Shemitah, may be the first time since King Solomon to have a united people of Israel in a united country called Israel with a majority of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. That hasn't happened since Solomon. And when a majority of Jews actually live in the Land of Israel, get ready! Get ready! There's a reason we're building this stronghold in the heart of Judea. This oasis for the believers around the world to come to the heart of Judea. There's nothing better that we could be doing in these days. Living in this land and representing believers around the world. Because literally, it's all happening right now.

The era of Trump is over, the chaos of corona is still affecting the world and Israel now, once again, this last time, stands alone among the nations. And friends, now more than ever our eyes should be on Israel because the destiny, it's unfolding right now. And the Torah that we learn, is the best guide to help us transition into that era that we're all being guided towards.

And as a fellowship, I wanted you to know that we're working to help restore the altar of Joshua behind the scenes. We're doing a lot. And there was a farm that was there that was protecting that holy and sacred site with sheep grazing around the areas, making sure that no person or authority would ever come. They were evicted by the Israeli government for some political reason. Perhaps it was some sort of irrational gesture to President Biden, it's almost impossible to know why it happened, but now we are working to bring that farm back to the altar of Joshua. There will be no better protection and you should know that all of us have a certain merit in that work.

And so with that Land of Israel introduction, the crazy news, the bad news and the struggle that we are all a part of in protecting and guarding these holy places, I just want to invite Ari Abramowitz to come here and join with us, and share some Torah from Judea. It's just, I'm thrilled that Ari is happy, he's healthy, his family is all together. D'vash had a one-year birthday last week. There were balloons in the house. There was a big celebration. D'vash had a crown on her head. She had no idea what was happening. She's one. But it was just a happy, healthy

good time, corona free, thank the good Lord. And so that was quite a drama and I'm thrilled that the drama is over. So Ari, take it over and let us know.

Ari

Hello, my friends. We just entered the month of Adar, the month of Purim, a month in which we are supposed to increase our joy. Jews around the world, we sing the song. How does it go?

Misha, misha, misha, misha...

Whoever enters the month of Adar increases joy and I'm sure that's what I did by singing, that Jeremy is cracking up right now. And some of you may be as well, justifiably. But that's the idea. That when we enter this month, the month of Adar, we increase our happiness, which in these times in world history is a great idea, although it's not necessarily a small ask, or an easy ask. It's hard to just command someone to be happy. For there to be a mitzvah, a divine directive to be happy is not a simple thing. How such a command is even possible is a fellowship session in itself. And we could get into this idea very soon.

But first I want to tell you about this Shabbat. Around this time of year, there are four special Torah readings in addition to the Torah portion of the week. This Shabbat was a special reading called Parashat Sh'kalim. Sh'kalim from the shekel and it was taken from Exodus Chapter 30:11 through 16. And the reading describes a type of census of the nation of Israel that the Torah commanded be taken in the desert after the sea parted when the Israelites began journeying through the wilderness.

So as many of you know, it's forbidden to count Jews directly by number, a sin for which King David is punished in the book of Sh'muel bet, the second book of Samuel. Hence, the Torah commands that the Jews be indirectly counted by tallying up the half shekel pieces that each of them contributed. It wasn't a huge amount, it was a half shekel, it was approximately the same value, I believe, that a dollar has today. It was something that everybody could do.

Now Rav Elimelech Biderman shared a teaching from the most prominent of all commentators, Rashi, who explains that in verse 13, Hashem showed Moshe a coin. Rashi says a coin, a half a shekel made of fire taken from under His holy throne. Its weight was a half shekel and Hashem said this is what they should give. Now our sages ask, why did Hashem show Moshe a coin made from fire? Why didn't He just show Moshe a standard silver half shekel? And the answer Rav Biderman brings down is that Hashem wasn't only showing the size and the weight of the coin, Hashem was also showing the manner in which the half shekel should be given. Hashem doesn't want us to serve Him in a cold, detached manner, devoid of love and emotion. Hashem wants us to serve Him with joy and with passion. The fiery coin exemplified the passion with which Hashem desires that we should give the half shekel. You see in our hearts, when we

serve Hashem with love and passion, that is what is sacred and precious to Him. And that's why He keeps it under His holy throne.

Now, if you're anything like me, hearing this may give you a little bit of a complex. For me, especially, particularly lately, these days in quarantine and isolation blur into other days and I found that often my prayers like my days have become rote. I'm reciting them sometimes without even thinking about their meaning. I'm not proud of this, but it's true. Sometimes my service of God, it feels bland, not always but sometimes. More often than I'd like to admit.

Just this Shabbat, I reflected on the fact that after lunch, I recited the blessing after the meal and I don't think I really internalized even one word. My head just was somewhere else and this realization, it hurts my heart. I feel disappointed in myself. Now the way I've always handled this disappointing feeling was by comparing my relationship with Hashem to any other deeply meaningful relationship of my life, whether with a spouse or a child. Some people talk about the importance of quality time in these relationships. But really, you can't engineer quality time. You have to spend quantity time and within that quantity time, the quality moments happen. Even when we put on our tefillin, our phylacteries in the morning, as we wrap the strap around our fingers, we say the famous words from the second chapter of the book of Hoshea – I will betroth you to Me forever, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in judgment and in compassion and in mercy. I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness and you shall know the Lord.

Every day we are betrothing ourselves to Hashem and in a relationship of that commitment, you show up. Whether you feel it or not. So these perspectives have helped me power through the many inspirationless moments that I feel sometimes. But I saw a teaching on this week's portion from Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz who shared a different perspective on this struggle. The struggle to keep that fire of our divine service alive. He explained that in the present times of the coronavirus, many people temporarily lost their sense of smell and taste, but they didn't stop eating. They forced themselves to eat because they knew that they needed to eat in order to survive. Anyways, he said that this is a divine hint. That those who have lost their taste for and enjoyment in Torah and prayer and divine service should continue performing those mitzvot because eventually you'll get your taste back and you'll once again enjoy the closeness to Hashem and the service of Hashem.

Rav Biderman shared a story. It's called the mashal, an allegory and I just loved it. The story goes that there were two brothers who were international music sensations. They composed music that brought much happiness and joy to the world and then one day there was an explosion in their studio and they both went deaf. They couldn't hear a thing.

Now one of the brothers was so grieved that he himself was no longer able to enjoy the music that he was composing that he stopped composing music altogether and he entered a different

profession. He just couldn't take the pain of not being able to hear and enjoy his music. The other brother, too, was pained but decided to continue composing the music by heart because at least the rest of the world can enjoy it, even if he couldn't. So years went by and there were medical advances and medical technology and the brothers were able to undergo a surgery and get their hearing back. So now, the brother who had continued composing music, even when he was deaf, when he got his hearing back, he was able to appreciate and enjoy the music he composed during that time on a whole new level. And the other brother, who quit, well he had nothing.

You see when we show, when we open our hearts to God in prayer, even if just words come out and we aren't feeling it in our hearts, we cannot lose faith, we cannot waver. Perhaps it's God putting up a wall to test us. To see if our love for Him is real. And to see if we simply won't accept no for an answer. As a matter of fact, when we feel emotionally disconnected, perhaps we should be honored and grateful to be presented with such an opportunity. For serving God from such a place of numbness and disconnection may indeed be a very high level of service. After all, our souls are thrust down into this earth into a world of the illusion of multiplicity and physicality and enticement to sin and to go astray. And from the depths of this physical existence, we have the greatest and most profound opportunity to connect to the Divine. In the most meaningful and beautiful way.

It's actually to me, it's reminiscent of a beautiful verse from the Song of Songs, composed by King Solomon, describing the nature of our relationship with God. It's chapter 2, verse 9 in Shir Hashirim, in the Song of Songs.

Song of Solomon 2:9 My love is like a gazelle, like a young stag. See where he stands behind our wall. He looks in at the window, he peers through the opening.

He stands behind the wall. Hashem is standing behind the wall gazing through the windows, peeking through the cracks. There are times when we're looking for God and He's there. We see it, we feel it, we know it. He's gazing at us through the window, through the screen of this world, He sees us and we see Him and we feel the love. But then the verse says that He's peeking at us through the lattice, through a crack in the wall. At times like that, when he's peeking through a crack in the wall, we can't see Him and we can't sense Him. It's not like the window where we can see each other. He's standing behind the wall, peeking at us through a crack. We can't see Him at all.

But open your hearts my friends, when peering at something through a crack in the wall, all you can see is the object of your focus. The entirety of your vision is what you are looking at. That's the difference between the crack and the window. So, in those moments where Hashem is behind the wall, peering at us through a crack. We may not see Him and we may not feel Him, but He is there. He is there looking at you with a love and a yearning of a Father to His most

beloved and precious child that is staying true to Him and searching for Him and loving Him even when He is hidden from sight.

So my friends allow me to bless all of you, to bless all of us, that we are able to continue kindling the flames of our love for HaShem in our hearts. That we are always able to remember that He is gazing lovingly at us and that particularly during these times in which there is a veil of darkness and confusion in the world that our love for Him and our love for each other is more precious than ever. Thank you, my friends, may Hashem bless you and protect you. Please reach out and stay in touch and together may we all go from strength to strength and Jeremy, thank you. Thank you for being such a good friend to me and for being such a source of strength and encouragement to me and to my family during these times. Back to you, my friend.

Jeremy

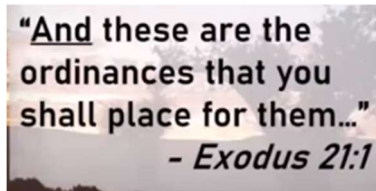
Thank you, Ari, that was truly spectacular and gorgeous. I'm just being honest. I love the idea of peering through the cracks. And when God is distant and peering through the cracks, the eyes are all on you. I love that idea and I also love that you sang for us. That was amazing.

So, alright, so here we are in these last two Torah portions, they're really like one continuation. You know the Ten Commandments that were given was the first time absolute morality was articulated into the world. Biblical values were formed. The spiritual foundations, civilization foundations, modern western lives that we live today were established, given birth. We gave birth to the greatest time in human history.

Humanity rose from barbarians and Vikings and just illiteracy, poverty, horrible misery to morality. Abundance to the technology that we experience today. To a time that the world had never seen before that. We are the expression of what would happen if the world would somehow just hold on, you know, thou shall not murder, family – both husband and wife commanded in the prohibition for adultery. Family, a unit where children are commanded to honor their mother and father. It's like these values, they gave birth to the greatest civilization on earth.

And if you erase these values like Hitler, like Stalin tried, the world will revert to a living hell. We've seen it with our own eyes. We've seen the promises of the blessings. The promises of the curses manifest in our lifetime. In our, if not our lifetime, at least within our recent history that we can really know people that lived through that hell on earth. It's not like there's a vengeful God who's bringing curses onto humanity if you don't follow the path of the Torah. It's like there's a loving God that's trying to guide us toward a blessed life. To walk in truth, in righteousness, because the alternative will destroy itself and this portion, Mishpatim, continues the cycle of revelation at Sinai. It ends with a new revelation with Moses and the elders.

And like this portion, there's so many layers here and it's so interconnected to the last session that we did in Yitro. And that's why the Torah portion begins in the most bizarre way. Look how the portion starts off in Exodus 21:1:



I mean we're talking about a new Torah portion, a new chapter, a new book. You don't start off a book with the word "and." And these are the ordinances – who starts off a chapter like that? If you were to write that on an English paper, your creative writing teacher would give you a minus for starting a sentence, never mind a chapter with the word and. That's just not how you start a sentence.

So the Torah, as the greatest work of literature in the world isn't wrong here. It's just showing us that this portion is a continuation of the last portion. It's the outcome of the Ten Commandments. It's a new portion, but it's fundamentally connected to Yitro and the giving of the Ten Commandments. And that's why it starts off saying, "and these are the ordinances that you shall place before them."

So, now I want to discuss this pattern because this pattern of revelation, it's not only the story of how Israel received revelation. It's a map and a guide for us to receive revelation in our life. And like everything in the Torah, it's multi-dimensional. It's a pattern woven in on several different levels. And today, I'm going to try to unpack all of those levels and show they're all really pointing toward the same way the same structure, the same way to think, the same way to be in the world and hopefully bring the light of revelation into our lives because man, I sure know that I need it.

So first, let's start with the big picture. This is like the first layer, the outer layer of the onion. And so, let's see. The Ramban Nachmanides, one of the greatest commentators, philosophers, mystics in Jewish history, he lived around the 1200's, one of the greatest minds to ever walk on earth and in his introduction to the book of Exodus, he points out that the book of Exodus really has three themes. Three sections, three processes that happen in the book of Exodus.

One, the story of the exodus from Egypt. The second is the giving of the Torah and the process of Mount Sinai. And then the third section is the building of the tabernacle which we're going to get into in the next week, the mishkan. And that's a pretty solid overview of the book of Exodus and that division is just spot on.

So now, I just want to look at these three stages as the process that every believer is meant to go through in their own lives and then we're going to bring it down to more and more resolution. So liberation from Egypt. We spoke about this in those week's Torah portions. Those were amazing sessions. Breaking free from the default of our reality, the default the Torah is teaching us is we are slaves. We are enslaved to something. We are held back. We are in Mitzrayim. We're in constraints. That's what the word Egypt in Hebrew means. It means constraints. Maybe it's our fear, our pride, our laziness, our upbringing. Who knows? All of us are held back by the obstacles. And the first step is to break through, to grow beyond ourselves, to actualize ourselves. That's stage one of the first stage of the book of Exodus.

Then the second, the Torah, the revelation at Sinai. The Torah is the covenant. It's a commitment, it's the responsibility. It's like freedom without commitment, it's aimless. It's purposeless. I mean, in receiving the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, it's like that's what happened at Sinai, we received the yoke of the kingdom of heaven and it's like why do we call it the yoke? We could have called it the honor of the kingdom of heaven. A pledge allegiance to the king. No, No. We call it kabbalat ol malkut hashamayim. Now what does that mean? It's like a yoke to help us understand what was the purpose of Sinai. What was the purpose of receiving this covenant?

Receiving the Torah, it's like you take an ox and he's just roaming free. It's aimless, it's pointless, it's a waste of just so much potential. But you put a yoke on its shoulders and you can take all of its energy and transform the earth. You're making it productive. You're giving it a focus. It's like we're going to be serving something in this world. It can be aimless and purposeless. We can serve our own desires, our own lusts. You can bow down to your fears. You can just live a life that has no purpose and you're just serving whatever comes to mind. Or you can commit to aim beyond yourself, to grow, to become your better self. It's at Sinai we committed to the ultimate good in our lives, in every aspect possible. We're going to try to live and make our best families, our best selves, learn as much as we can, be as healthy as we can. We are going to try to commit to the ultimate good in every aspect of our lives.

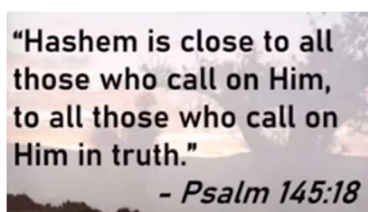
How we treat our friends. How we treat our families. How we treat our spouse, how we treat our children. It's aiming towards the ultimate good in every aspect. From the first commandment all the way down to the tenth commandment which is even perfecting our inner world. There's no compromises here. And we may not achieve it, but we definitely know we are aiming towards the ultimate good.

And the third stage is the building of the tabernacle, bringing God into the world. Bringing God into our lives and that's how the book of Exodus ends. Because that is the ultimate goal. It doesn't really matter how great we get or how much weight you lose on your diet in order to be healthy. In that work towards becoming a healthier person, we're trying to bring God into our lives. That is the goal. The ultimate name that we carry. The book of Names. Shemot. It's

not called Exodus in Hebrew. It's called the book of names because God chose to call His Name upon us and when we walk in the world, we carry His Name with us. The Creator is known as the God of Israel, and the tabernacle, it's the representation that God dwells among us, inside us. His Name is called upon us. Now that's the macro dimension. That's the pattern that you can see in the entire book of Exodus. But if we zoom in closer, you can see the pattern more articulated. It spells out the process for us because those are three huge ideas.

But how do we really break that down into steps that can we achieve something in our lives here? And so, here's how it goes. Let's look a little bit closer. How did Israel leave Egypt? Let's look a little bit closer. That's stage one, the people just needed to act. They needed to move they needed to just start walking. They didn't know they were leaving and where they were going. They didn't have all the answers. They were called to make sacrifices. They knew it wasn't going to be easy. They were going to have to give up something that they cherished. Something that was dear to them. They were going to have to make sacrifices in action. But in the action, in the walk, a pillar of fire guided them along the way. And from that journey, in action, they got inspiration, and further guidance. That's how it all started.

Everyone knows that there's something that's holding them back in their own Egypt. Something that if they were to fix, if they were to overcome, they know their life would be better. Maybe it's their diet, maybe it's their relationship, maybe you don't know right now and that's ok. Because all you need to do is ask. Just take a moment, sit in a quiet place, walk to a place where there's peace and quiet. Just ask yourself a question. What am I doing now that's holding me back from where I need to be? Or what do I need to do now to take my life to the next level? Like what is the next step that I should be taking to make myself better? The answer will come to you, guaranteed. It will absolutely be revealed to you, a promise in the Bible. Now, you don't need a therapist to tell you. That's what King David teaches you. That's what he meant in Psalm 145:18:



**"Hashem is close to all
those who call on Him,
to all those who call on
Him in truth."
- Psalm 145:18**

To all those who call Him in truth. If you're being honest with yourself, and you're asking the question sincerely, you want to know what do I need to do or what do I need to stop doing? Hashem is right there to guide you, but then when you get the answer, maybe it's to sacrifice that sheep, put the blood on the doorpost and start walking east. If that's the answer, whatever the answer is in your life, just do it. Don't wait for inspiration. Don't wait for understanding. Act. Just do it. It's like amazing.

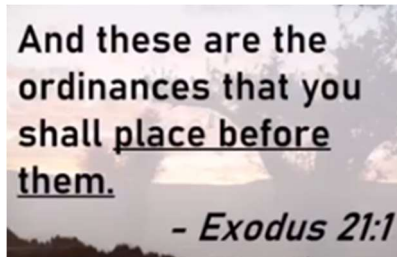
I didn't know what Ari was going to say today and here he's what is he talking about...I don't feel like it..feeling numb...I just... Yes! Exactly! Just do it and in the act of doing, you will discover understanding. Break free from your Egypt that's holding you back. Just start walking and the revelation will come. And we see that in Scripture, that's like the foundational revelation at Sinai. It came down as principles. This revelation that they received, the guidance that they got. It was like 10 commandments, that's the next stage. I mean just like start working, start doing, immediately.

But then wait a minute. I want deeper revelation now. It came down as principles and the Torah here is teaching us how to think, how to organize our thoughts, how to organize our lives. What are your foundational principles? Who are you? What are you living for? What are the principles you want to reign in your family? I mean these are huge questions that 95% of the world don't really ever think about. How on earth are you going to create your best life, your best marriage, your best family, without defining what your best life looks like? How do you start? You need your own Ten Commandments. Now it doesn't have to be ten. Maybe it's only seven, maybe it's thirteen principles. I don't know.

Years ago, Tehila and I took the time to articulate the principles of our family. We came to 12. We did it together with our kids and like our kids added a few things that were really important for them. It was like a beautiful process that we did with our older kids and this is an amazing exercise to do, before Rosh Hashanah. We spoke a little bit about this before Rosh Hashanah, as you prepare for the new year, but this is something that needs to be done all the time. It needs to be reviewed, it needs to be worked on, it needs to be crystallized. It needs to be refined. And when Tehila and I and the kids came up with our 12 principles, this was before the Arugot farm. It was before everything. We were just a young couple trying to figure out how we wanted to live in the world. But articulating those principles, now it's so clear to me that would lay the foundations for our family to live where we live today, to do what we do today. It's a testimony that we have the ability to be co-creators of our life with God because those principles, they didn't just come from us. Those were in prayerful moments of reflection. Who's helping us come to these clarities? That is revelation.

And I printed up these principles and until today. I put all my kids around them from that time. It's hung up in our living room, but it's lower than all the other pictures, so my kids can, when they walk by towards their bedroom, they have to walk by our family's principals. And I watch them every once in a while. They sit down, they kind of read them, just to look at them or look at the pictures and that's constantly there. And it's like only when you have your thoughts and articulate them into words do you really have clarity of thoughts. Writing is one of the best forms of thinking. In some ways, it's the clearest form of thought. And in some ways, that what this parsha is. The Ten commandments, they give us these principles and then Moses starts to bring the principles down to earth. He starts to articulate what it would look like in the real world to bring them down into reality. Moses is now showing us what a society would look

like if we lived by these principles of justice, of righteousness, where God would really be our Lord. Now that's what the verse in the Torah uses, this particular language. Look at the first verse again in Parashat Mispatim, Exodus 21:1:



Place before them? Like that's just a peculiar way to phrase that language. Like why does the Torah say that? It should have said, these are the ordinances you should tell them. These are the rules you should teach them. These are the ordinances that you shall place before them. Like why does it say that? So the midrash has a story. Listen to this.

God comes to Moses and says, Moses, don't think you can just teach these ideas and laws by telling the laws over a few times. I wrote in the Torah that you shall place the laws before them. You need to spell out these rules like a table that's prepared and set to be eaten right before the guests come for Shabbat.

The midrash is saying, here's something so deep, saying our principles, they need to be set up, organized, like a shulcan aruch, like a set table, articulated, clarified, set before us, everything in order and everything in place. Clarity. And so from these ideas, it's like big principles we actually have to spell them out, order them, prioritize them. It's like a part of our week, I look at those principles, the ones that are important to me, and I schedule them into my life. If I want my children to be in tune with nature, well we need to like go out of our house and go hiking. Well, that needs to be in my schedule or it's just not going to happen. If Torah is important for me, I better learn with my kids. Well, that needs to be in my schedule, on my phone. If it's not there, I just know myself. It's not going to happen until it's laid out, articulated, and then brought into reality.

What does it really look like in life? In my life's schedule, well those principles will just remain some lofty ideas. Parashat Mishpatim is teaching us, take the principles and bring it all the way down into the real world. You have goals you want to accomplish? It's not just enough to think about them, or talk about them. Until you write them down, set them before you like a set table for a festive Shabbat meal, you haven't done the proper work yet. And like I've never shared these publicly before, some people from the fellowship in the earlier sessions, they asked to see my family's principles, so of course I sent it to them. But I just think it's a good idea in this opportunity just to share with you the family principles that we came up with. So

maybe some of these ideas you can take for your family. Just to see how we did it, how we articulated them. Some of them are not going to be relevant, some of them might be. But I just want you to see what we did and of course afterwards, I'll send you this file that you can keep for yourself and maybe build off of or edit or fix or change. But can we put my family principles up on the screen?

Let's just read through these:

משפחת גימפל תשע"ז



We are a family dedicated to serving Hashem with joy. Number 1 was important for me to be the first part. We're a family that's here to serve. We're not here to take pleasure in this world and have fun for ourselves. We are here to serve a higher purpose and we're going to do that and we're going to have fun and we're going to do it with joy. I want those to be the guiding lights of my family.

Number 2, we are pioneers and settlers committed to living in, protecting, and working the Land of Israel. I'm reminding you this was before the Arugot farms. These were the ideals and principles that led us to live that life.

Number 3, the Torah is our guiding light and exploring Hashem's wisdom is our passion.

Number 4, we are a family of leaders, we elevate the people around us by living as mentches and as a kidush Hashem with our friends, our goal is to be a chevremán. So mentch in Yiddish just means a good man. We want to be a good mentch. That's like a Yiddish word. A kidush Hashem is a sanctification of God. That when people see us, we carry God's Name. I want them to say that's the way the Jewish people are. That's what the Torah does. That when we live and we live as leaders that it should be a sanctification of God's name in the world. And the last man with our friends, a chevremán is someone that's just really fun to be with. Ari is like the greatest chevremán. I want to be like Ari. That's what our family's goal is. I should change number 4 to be like we and with our friends, we want to be like Ari.

Number 5, we are striving to always grow, learn, and develop our God-given potential.

Number 6, we love animals and feel a deep responsibility to care for them and guard all of Hashem's creation.

Number 7, our family are the people always closest to our hearts, and we are bound together in endless love and eternal friendship forever. To me, that's so important. A strong family is the base of the Bible. A strong family is the base of society. If we love our family, we can love our community. We love our community; we can love our country. We love our country, we can love the world. But if you don't love your inner circle, it's like the foundations.

Number 8, we are a family that loves to adventure, explore and travel together. Together we can overcome anything.

Number 9, we express our appreciation for the gift of life by taking care of our bodies through healthy food and exercise.

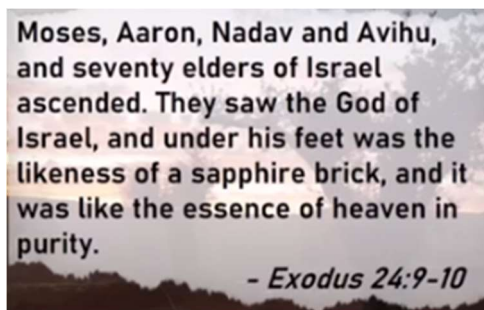
Number 10, we are a family that prays with all our hearts and with our own music.

Number 11, our home is open to guests, geared toward chesed, lovingkindness, sharing and serving others.

Number 12, we are a family that always seeks to be guided by Hashem in our lives.

So those are my family's principles. Some of those principles you can't always schedule them in, but the ones that I do, believe me, they are locked and loaded into my life down to the detail. And I think that's what this Torah portion is teaching us. How to organize our principles, how to organize our lives to really make our lives as good as we possibly can. We need a strategy for life and the Torah is giving us the God-given strategy of how to make it great.

And so, we're far from perfect. I mean, sometimes I feel like my family puts the fun back into dysfunctional families. I mean I have a 17-year-old, he's doing his thing, I don't know if those principles speak to him at all, but listen. At least I know what I'm striving for, at least I have what I'm aiming toward. It's like for me, in my life, those principles led us to our farm. And from the Arugot Farm, we were led to build our fellowship and following that Biblical pattern and guidance has been one of the greatest blessings of our lives. And that's why I wanted to share it with you. That's just like a Biblical secret and how the Torah teaches us to think. How it shapes our lives. How the Torah itself transforms how we live. And so then, look what happens from the Sinai revelation to the articulation of the rules in this portion. At the end of the portion, what happens? New revelation. Exodus 24: 9-10:



It's like a new revelation. It's like from Egypt to freedom to revelation to commitment to principles to articulation. And then, Israel attains a new revelation, a newer understanding, a more pure taste of the same pattern. It's like a more pure taste of heaven. It's like through the Biblical feasts, you see the same dimension. It's the same pattern in the Torah, guiding us toward the same thing. We start off with Passover, we count the omer, details all the way up to the Sinai revelation. From freedom to commitment and responsibility and revelation and then what do we have? We have Sukkot where we dwell in the clouds of glory. We built our own mishkan in our own tabernacles in our own homes. That's the Biblical pattern. It's all teaching us how to receive revelation. It's like practice, it's lived, it's celebrated. There are rituals, it's like trying to get into our hearts, into our minds, into our actions. Teaching us with all of our body. It's like we build the sukkah and we take a moment and we just rejoice. We rejoice in what we've accomplished. We're commanded to just be, just be in the sukkah. Be in the holiday, just be with your family, just soak it up. Be satisfied with whatever progress you made throughout that year.

And look at how amazing this is. Look at the detail of the Torah portion here at the end of the second revelation. Look at what it says, Exodus 24:12:

"Hashem said to Moses, ascend to Me to the mountain and be there and I shall give you the stone tablets and the teachings and the commandment that I have written to teach them."
- Exodus 24:12

Be there – v'hiyeh sham. And be there. Why does it say and be there? It doesn't need to be there. Those words don't belong there. It's teaching us the secret. It's like as we walk this journey, we're walking in the light. We're growing and we're trying to become better people. Trying to make this world a better place. More loving, more kindness, more healing. But don't forget Sukkot. Don't forget Shabbat. After the work, after the action, the inspiration, the articulation. Heyeh sham. Recognize. And be satisfied. And enjoy what you're building in your life. That's bringing God into your life. Don't forget the last step of being there. Don't spend so much time raising your children that you forget to enjoy your children. Heyeh sham. Be there. Be with them. That's the by-product of the Torah life. Of guidance, of growth. The by-product is Sukkot. It's the holiday of happiness. That's why the Hebrew word for growth is phonetically almost the same word as happiness. Can we put that up on the screen?



Happiness in Hebrew is simcha. Growth in Hebrew is zmicha. Practically it sounds like the same word. Now the goal is not to be happy, but a life dedicated to higher living and moments where you're just there will result with your soul empowered, your soul ennobled. And your life will be driven by purpose and that walk toward growth creates a walk of joy.

Now friends, we are in the final stretch of completing the entire book of exodus. It's like, wow! It's amazing! We're doing it together, we're going through the whole thing on this journey together! A faith journey in these wild times and as more chaos ensues, it's incumbent upon us to get more order into our lives. Those principles, that guidance, that is how we will weather this storm. That is our spiritual ark when the flood comes.

And so knowing that we've been brought together, connected to the mountains of King David, living as best as we can, as an example of a community that the Bible envisioned, that is miraculous. It's marvelous, it's inexplicable, it's awesome. And we're just getting started. Our

headquarters is being built, and this is not just a caravan on a mountaintop. It's like, no, no, no. In our hearts, this is an everlasting monument and a testimony to what God can do through a small band of believers. In the most contested real estate in the world with the whole world international courts against us. We will reclaim Judea. And so, it's not power that runs the world. It's not might that runs the world. But it's God's Spirit and our prayers. And so, I want you to know that I'm praying for every family in this fellowship every single day. You are blessed from Zion. Thank you so much for joining us today. Hope to hear from you soon and I'll see you again on Sunday.

Aaronic blessing.

Shalom, my friends.