

Session 81

Yitro – The Soul Map Series: Aharon, Hod – Gratitude, Acceptance, Hope

23 January 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=09o3MhaTzxw>

Jeremy

Shalom everybody, welcome to the fellowship. I'm so, so happy to see you all. It's just so good, it's been a wild couple of weeks and it's just so good to be back together, just seeing you all. I feel like I get re-centered again. I love seeing all of your beautiful faces. The Gimpel family, we all had corona, we're all back to full strength now, Baruch Hashem. I'm sorry to say that Ari's been sick all day. He's kind of been up and down the past few days. And he was planning on coming on today, but then as the day went on, he just felt worse and worse. So, he's made a video for you and we're going to send it out as a highlight, but he just wasn't able to make it in time. And just wasn't able to make it today. So, also the fellowship connection we're going to push off until next week. Because in order to make a connection, we need Ari Abramowitz.

But I did want to say something. We are still in the midst of a global pandemic or so they say. But it really does feel like the whole thing is starting to crumble now a little bit. And my instincts are the skies are going to open up soon and I'm just telling you, get ready for Sukkot 2022. There's going to be a celebration on the Arugot Farm that you're not going to want to miss.

But with that, I also want to start tonight with a prayer. We get a lot of prayer requests and every single one of them we take seriously. It's all I pray for. I just pray for us, for our fellowship, for all that our work, it's an absolute...it has just fully taken over all of my prayers. And I want you all to know, that there are a lot of people that are either struggling with health issues or people that are right around the people that we love, that are struggling with health issues. And I just want to take this time to pray together because it is such a unique opportunity where we can all come together and pray from around the world through this Land as one people with one heart. And I just don't want to miss the opportunity.

And so, thank You HaShem, for this fellowship. Thank You for this life, thank You for every gift we have because everything we have is a gift. We didn't earn this life, we didn't have to wake up today. Every day is a blessing. Thank You. The world is sick, we're sick, and we need Your healing. We are uniting our hearts as a fellowship for this moment. Bringing our hearts and souls together from around the world and directing them towards You from this Land. Please send Your healing to our loved ones. Watch over every member of this fellowship and their loved ones around them. We are one extended community. Fractured and separated around the globe. But now, we are one person with one heart. Please heal every person that is on our heart. You are the source of healing. You are the source of life. And as we gather here, we

start off our week. We are declaring that our lives that You give us are dedicated to You. Amen.

Ok, my friends. We have been through a lot this week. It's been a lot here in Judea. You know we went through the whole week, the struggle to save the Arugot Vineyard. We just pulled out our first bottles of wine and the forces of evil came to attack this vision that quite literally Amos had that one day we would return to the mountains where Amos had this vision to plant vineyards and drink of their wine, never to be removed from this Land again. And you know, I just can't help but feel as though our farm is not just a farm, it represents some higher ideal. And it's just been...it was a battle against forces that are far greater than us. There's no logical reason the government wanted to destroy the vineyard to begin with. And there's no logical reason why at the last minute they called it off. The government doesn't usually do that. They had already ordered the tractors and the demolition team.

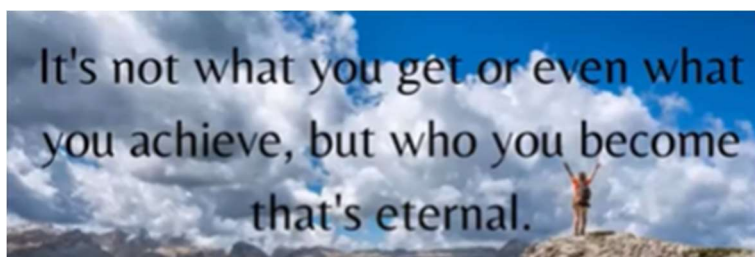
That's why we just took out all of our guns and just fired in every direction, calling every person that we had known, of firing to the internet, the media, I mean we just pulled out every stop. And somehow, it was called off. And in my life, I've never felt like spiritual forces above were manifesting realities below here. So many people were praying and calling and writing and working to stop the insanity of the useless reasonless destruction of our vineyard on Shemitah, on the week of Tu Bishvat, which is the day the Jewish people plant trees to bless the Land. The whole thing was just beyond comprehension.

And once again, there's just nothing other than a witness to the power of our prayers. Because there have been many demolitions in Judea and Samaria if you followed the news. And somehow, our farm was protected. Our farm was just like a firewall around us of prayer that somehow stopped. And you know, there were three sleepless nights, I didn't sleep for three nights. And I was just on the phone with America, with Israel, I was just doing everything that I could within my power. And then it took me about two days to recover. And then, I recover only for me and Tehila and my whole family to contract covid. That knocked me out for another couple of days. And then we finally got to get back up on our feet and then Ari and Shaena got the vid. And it's just been a wild time. Never a dull moment in Judea.

And I think that really that's the lesson here. You know, most young people today are either educated, trained, influenced by the culture. They're looking to get as much as possible for doing as little as possible for as long as possible. And their dreams are to retire in order to do even less. And that's just not a good strategy for life. The biblical tradition teaches that the world was designed to challenge us. Outside of Eden, we're told, you're going to have to work, and you're going to have to really from the sweat of your brow. And man was created to overcome, not to over sleep. And there isn't a single hero in the Bible that didn't live through hardships, through challenges. In fact, it was the hardships and the sacrifices that the patriarchs, the prophets, the kings made that made them into the heroes that they were.

And in that way, every story in Scripture is teaching us that what stands in our way IS the way. That's not like, "oh life is like this and then there's a challenge." No, the challenge, that's exactly what's meant to be happening now. And then the question needs to be as well...what's the purpose of making a challenging world? So, the sages of Israel explain it like this – you can't fully express yourself until you're pushed to the edge of your ability and beyond. Until you push yourself as far as you can go, you have no idea how far you can go. And just like the heat of the furnace purifies gold, the hardships and challenges of this world form our character.

And during the fellowship, maybe, I don't remember how many months ago, this phrase came to me in a daydream. And I want to put it up on the screen for just a moment. Tabitha made this for me.



And I think that that is the heart of the Torah. It doesn't matter what you do and it doesn't matter even what awards and the credits that you achieve. It's who you become as a person and the challenges they forge us into who we are. And so, it's not like, "Ah, I just can't wait for the things to get back to normal again." No, the normal is always going to be, there's a challenge. There's always going to be a challenge in life, and anyone that tells you anything else is just selling something.

But when I look for a role model for character, for inner strength, I look no further than the woman I married almost 20 years ago. It's not easy being married to such a force of integrity and goodness. Because most of the time I walk around feeling pretty unworthy. But we are so lucky to have her in our lives and on the fellowship. She started teaching this idea over Shabbat, but we never really got through it. So, I'm really excited to hear this and to learn this because it sounded amazing. And so, I just want to introduce to the fellowship my lovely wife Tehila.

Tehila

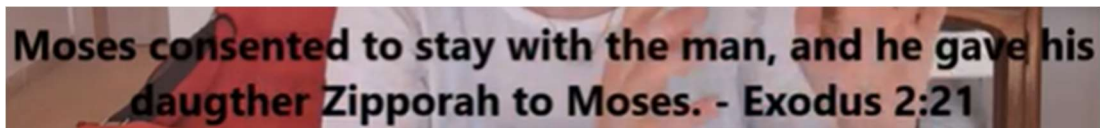
Hi everyone. It's great to be feeling better after our little stint with the Omicron. So, thank you for all your warm wishes. We're all feeling great, thank God. In this past week's Torah portion, the portion starts out well enough. Jethro, Yitro, hears about the miracles that happened to Israel and comes to join them. And it says, you know, that he brings Tziporah, Moshe's wife and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. And then the Torah, it goes on to explain the meaning of their names – Gershom means I was a stranger in a strange land, and Eliezer means

God saved me from the sword of Pharaoh. Now this is kind of odd. Usually, we just hear names when people are born, what do they mean? And you know, we find out the meaning of those names at that time, not later in their life. Why would all of a sudden, the Torah tells us the meaning of their names?

So, it's only natural that we turn to the Midrash to understand what's going on. But in this case the Midrash seems to tell a story even stranger than the question itself. In the Mekhilta, one of the oldest Midrashic traditions on Shemot, it says as follows:

Moses said to himself, "since the whole world are idol worshippers, I will worship the Creator of the world." And then Moses said to Yitro, "Let me marry your daughter Tzipporah." And Yitro said to him, "well you have to accept one condition and I will give her to you as a wife." Moshe said, "What is the condition?" And he answered, "That your first son will be for idol worship and all the children you have afterwards will be for God."

And Moshe accepted it. Yitro said, "Swear." And Moshe swore. And that is why the angel wanted to kill Moshe and Tzipporah, took a stone and circumcised their son. And Moses was saved. Whoa! What just happened there? Like we had a little question, why is the Torah explaining the names of the children and the Midrash comes and answers it with an even crazier story. A story accusing Moses of dedicating his own child to idolatry. So what's going on here? The Midrash seems to be weaving together a few strange stories in Exodus. In Chapter 2, verse 21, when Moshe stays with Yitro in Midian and marries Zipporah, it says that:



Moses consented to stay with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. - Exodus 2:21

But in the Hebrew, it doesn't say "consented." It says strange words. It says, **וַיֹּאֵל מֹשֶׁה**, (vayoel Moshe) meaning Moshe swore, but it doesn't say what he swore. So the Midrash is cleverly noticing this. But how does it make the jump that what he swore was to allow his child to be raised by Jethro and educated in idol worship? That's pretty harsh. Well, here's the thing. A nearly identical biblical term appears only in one other place in the Bible, in Judges Chapter 17, verse 11. And that is the story of a man named Mica, Micah, who finds a Levite to be his personal, idolatrous priest. And it says almost the exact same verse that we see about Moshe staying with Yitro. It says:



וַיֹּאֵל הַלֵּוִי לְשִׁבֶּת אֶת-הָאִישׁ

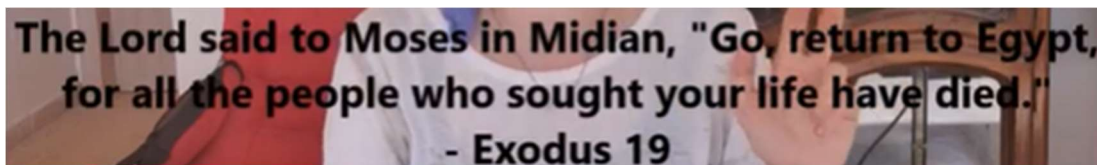
The Levite consented to stay with the man, that's the English translation, but using the same word in Hebrew that appears in Exodus, chapter 2, vayoel (וַיֹּאֵל) meaning "he swore." So the book of Judges is obviously trying to grab our attention that this story is connected to the story in Exodus. Now Judges goes on to tell us in Chapter 18 who this idolatrous Levite priest was. It says his name was Yehonatan, the son of Gershom, the son of...you guys holding your English Bible are probably going to say Menasha, but the Hebrew Bible, it's a little weird. It says Menasha with a tiny nun –



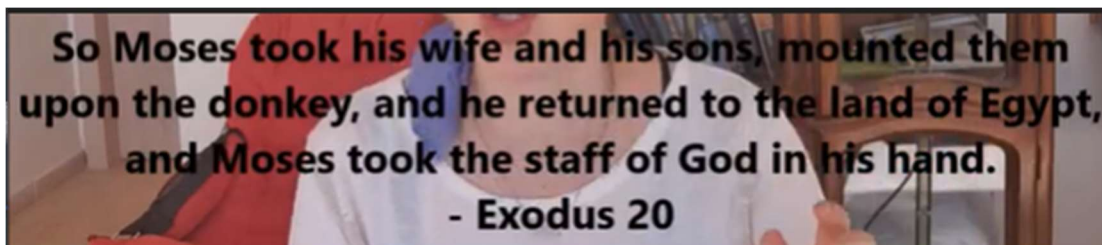
And if you took away that tiny nun, it actually says, Yehonatan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moshe.

And many people say that nun is small because it was added in to protect the honor of Moshe to not associate his idolatrous grandson to him. But in reality, his grandson was that idolatrous priest. So the Midrash is drawing our attention to these connections between the stories. It's showing that perhaps Moshe's child wasn't raised under Jewish influence, but under the idolatrous influence of his Midianite priest grandfather. And that kind of stuck to him, leading to the story in the end of the book of Judges.

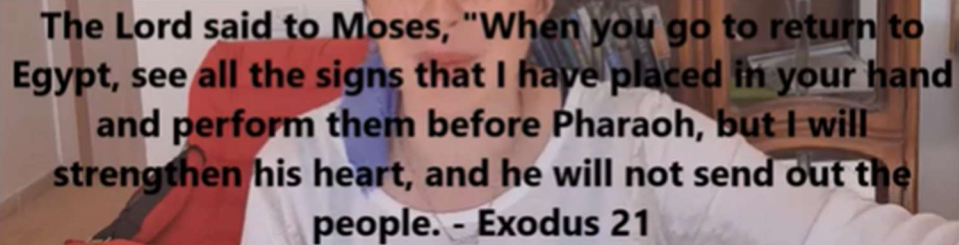
And then, the Midrash also references another super strange story. And that's of course the story of Moshe, Tziporah and the angel of death at the hotel. I want to look back at that story for a second. Let's go to the story of the hotel in Exodus, chapter 4. It says:



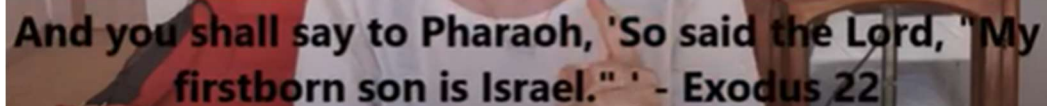
So HaShem says, "Ok, you got to go on your mission now in Egypt." And it says in verse 20:



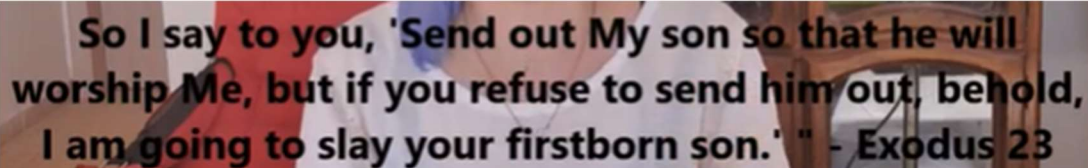
And then out of nowhere in the middle of his mission, verse 21:



The Lord said to Moses, "When you go to return to Egypt, see all the signs that I have placed in your hand and perform them before Pharaoh, but I will strengthen his heart, and he will not send out the people. - Exodus 21

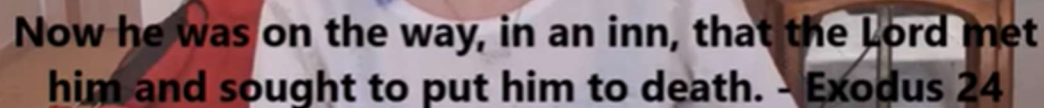


And you shall say to Pharaoh, 'So said the Lord, "My firstborn son is Israel." ' - Exodus 22

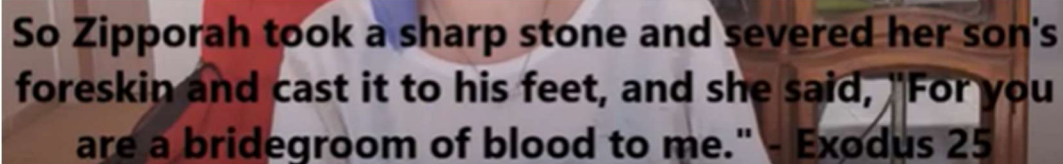


So I say to you, 'Send out My son so that he will worship Me, but if you refuse to send him out, behold, I am going to slay your firstborn son.' " - Exodus 23

And then what happens? Seemingly Moshe is just doing his job, he's on his mission, on his way to Egypt with his family to do what God sent him to do. And it says in verse 24:

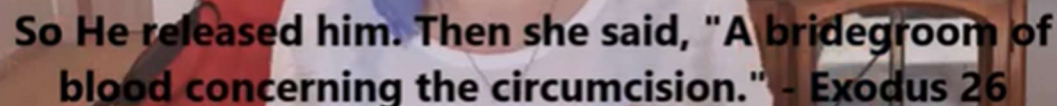


Now he was on the way, in an inn, that the Lord met him and sought to put him to death. - Exodus 24



So Zipporah took a sharp stone and severed her son's foreskin and cast it to his feet, and she said, "For you are a bridegroom of blood to me." - Exodus 25

What is going on in this story? And then it says in verse 26:



So He released him. Then she said, "A bridegroom of blood concerning the circumcision." - Exodus 26

This is a super strange story. Moshe is seemingly just doing what God told him, on his way to confront Pharaoh, and suddenly the angel shows up. There are so many things that are not even clear here. Why is HaShem sending Moshe on a mission and then out of nowhere, so angry at him that he sends an angel of death. And who is the angel even trying to kill? Moshe or the baby? It's not obvious at all. When you go back to verses 22 and 23 and read them

carefully, especially in light of what we learned in the Midrash, there might be some hidden meanings. It says, and you shall say to Pharaoh, so says the Lord, my firstborn son is Israel. The next verse could be understood as a continuation of that... so I say to you, send out My son, you know, send out Israel so that they can worship Me. And if you refuse to do that, I'm going to slay your firstborn son in the, you know, plague of the firstborn.

But there's another way to read this. Maybe what the verse is saying is, "Tell Pharaoh, my firstborn son is Israel. But I say to you...(and this is not a quote of what you're supposed to say to Pharaoh, but actually what God is saying to Moshe.) "Send out My son so that he will worship Me, and if you don't, I will slay your firstborn son." My son, referring to Moshe's child. Saying, you need to allow your child to be raised in the Jewish tradition. Perhaps the Midrash is pointing out that there's a less obvious way of reading these verses. Maybe Moshe was getting a double message. One was the national message. Go tell Pharaoh to free Israel. But then there was also a personal message hidden in his message to Pharaoh. Something in his national message was supposed to speak to him as well and say, "How could you have left your oldest son as an idolater? Just like I'm saying to Pharaoh, "Israel is my firstborn son. Let them worship Me. You have to hear that message echo in your ear about your own son." Tzipporah understands that and circumcises the baby and the angel releases either Moshe or the baby.

From the story, at the very least we learn that Moshe hadn't even circumcised his son. Maybe he was leaving him to be raised as a Gentile because of that oath. And HaShem is saying to him, "Why aren't you raising him as an Israelite? Just like I'm going to Pharaoh to ask him to release my firstborn son, you have to release your own son. Bring him back to the Israelite heritage."

So, there's a deep lesson in that story, if that's true. Moshe is off to save the Jewish people, and HaShem says, "Wait, before you go, fold it up, packed up in the message of your national mission is a message about you and your family. You have a son that hasn't been brought into the Jewish people. You may think, 'Nah, I don't have time to worry about raising my own family. I have a whole nation to save.'" But HaShem is saying, "Yes, you need to tend to all of Israel, but you also need to remember that part of serving the nation is also to bring your own son and to care for your own son's education as an Israelite."

There's no disconnect between your personal mission and your national mission. And Tzipporah understands this and saves the day. She says, "Yeah, we're all on this large, you know, this large mission for God, but we're also part of a greater story as individual families." So the story, these stories all seem to come together through this narrative, this seemingly very strange narrative of the Midrash. Perhaps Moshe swore to leave Yitro his son to raise him in the Midianite tradition, this angered HaShem and HaShem urged him, "Redeem your son when you're redeeming the Jewish people."

Tziporrah circumcised him, but maybe that wasn't enough. And maybe the bad influence that he had had under Yitro led Moshe's grandson astray as we see in the book of Judges and all these stories come together.

But what's weird, there's one more thing we have to figure out. We went to this Midrash to answer our original question, "Why does the Torah tell us the backstory on the children's names when Yitro comes to meet Israel in the desert in this past week's portion of Yitro?" That's where the Midrash appears. But the story doesn't seem to answer that question. It weaves together a whole bunch of other stories, but what about that actual question? Well, maybe it does. Let's look at those names again for a second. Gershom – I was a stranger, I was a stranger in a strange land. And Eliezer means – and God saved me from the sword of Pharaoh. Those names were meaningful to Moshe because they were his life.

But do they sound familiar? Is there any more succinct way of telling the Jewish story? We were strangers in a strange land and God saved us from the sword of Pharaoh. Now imagine the scenario of Yitro living in Midian. He's the head honcho of idol worship there. Some anonymous nobody shows up, he worships this strange one God, the Creator of the Universe. Well ok, at least I'll raise his sons properly in idolatry. And then his weird son-in-law says, "God told me to go to Egypt, save my brethren from Pharaoh, the King of the greatest empire in the world." Imagine the father-in-law scratching his head and saying, "Well good luck with that. Ok, good luck. Phew, at least I have the grandchildren to take care of instead of that weird dad of theirs who thinks he's going to redeem some slaves from Egypt."

And then, imagine, months go by. He hears nothing...until he hears something. That there was a people that were strangers in a strange land and their God saved them from the sword of Pharaoh, himself. Imagine looking down on his lap seeing his grandsons named "stranger in a strange land" and "God saved me from Pharaoh." Oh my God, he says to himself. My son-in-law was onto something. He was on to a really deep truth. And he says to himself, "I can't raise these children in idolatry. They need to be part of this greater story of Israel." The personal meets the national. He sees that the personal story of Moshe IS the national story. He realizes this too and he realizes that his family's story needs to connect with Jewish destiny. We can't go on trying to be individuals. These children were clearly meant to be part of something greater. In reality, it's just one story.

Now imagine the same lesson that Moshe got at the hotel, Yitro was now getting. Yitro has this great life in Midian, honor, leadership, wealth...he leaves it all behind to join the unfolding story of Jewish salvation. Even though he's a Gentile, he says, "My own personal family clearly needs to be tied in to this story in whatever way we can."

So maybe in the deepest sense the Midrash is calling out to all of us to read the stories of the Bible in our own life as they unfold. Where do we hear the echoes of the biblical story

happening to us in our personal stories? Maybe the Midrash is challenging us to say, you have to try to find ways for ourselves, for our families, for our children to be part of the unfolding biblical narrative. How do we intertwine our personal lives with the larger unfolding destiny of Israel? So, I think that this midrash is a beautiful call to us. It gives depth to so many of the stories in the Torah, and I think it echoes into our very lives today to read the Torah into our own stories and tie ourselves with the destiny of the Jewish people.

With that, I wish everyone a beautiful and inspired week. Bye, guys.

Jeremy

Wow! I don't know what to say about that. Was that amazing? That was amazing, right? Yes! That was like absolutely astounding. Connecting the book of Exodus to the book of Judges and then opening up the ancient Midrash to reveal a whole other dimension of understanding in Scripture of a story that didn't make sense otherwise. And then, just, without the Hebrew and without Tehila, how would we have known? And that was just so beautiful. Tehila, thank you so much, constantly keeping us connected to the Torah portion as we're like kind of finding our way through life, really realizing that the Torah is constantly speaking to us. It's like the national story, the personal story. It's all one and the same.

And so, I want to do now, I want to get into the heart of this fellowship. And this fellowship, we are one step away from completing the series on the Soul Map. And I think it's important before we kind of go into this, to just take a step back because we haven't met for two weeks. Why are we learning this series again? And there's two reasons. Everyone in this fellowship loves the Torah, loves Scripture, loves the dimensions and depth and meaning that we can find in this ancient text written thousands of years ago, that is just declaring Divine wisdom because it's speaking to people that are connecting with the technology all around the world in the most enlightened epoch of human history. And this ancient text is still speaking directly to our hearts and in blowing our minds...it's just how else can you explain that other than Divine Wisdom? So we love Scripture and this is another dimension of understanding how to read the Torah and how to understand the Bible. That the characters of the Bible, they're not just historic figures or even spiritual guides. But they're actually manifesting spiritual ideas. Their lives manifested virtues.

And each Biblical hero is another aspect of our own soul. And there is a spirit that underlies the entire project called the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible. And the spirit penetrates all of the laws, the rituals, the holidays, the commandments. And the Soul Map is the guide to the Spirit of the Law. For if you miss the spirit, you missed everything. And so, here is a beautiful paragraph that was written by Abraham Joshua Heschel. It's too big to put on the screen, but I really want to read it to you because it's so articulate. And it points to the heart of the matter. Here's what he writes:

“It is customary to blame secular science and anti-religious philosophy for the eclipse of religion in modern society. It would be more honest to blame religion for its own defeats. Religion declined not because it was refuted, but because it became irrelevant, dull, oppressive, insipid. When faith is completely replaced by creed; worship by discipline; love, by habit...when the crisis of today is ignored because of the splendor of the past. When faith becomes an heirloom rather than a living fountain. When religion speaks only in the name of authority, rather than with the voice of compassion, it's message becomes meaningless.”

And as I read that I just...yes, yes! Organized religion is collapsing in the western world. Churches are struggling to attract the next generation. The intermarriage rate of Jews in America has never been so high. Synagogues across the United States are closing up shop, especially after covid. Jews are literally disappearing at historic rates. If they're not connected to the Torah, it's like they barely stand a chance just to not disappear into the Americana of the Western World.

But, fundamentally, human nature hasn't changed. And there's a massive movement of people, Jews and non-Jews, that are seeking spirituality, seeking meaning, seeking a deeper understanding to this world. And Abraham, he's the father of Israel, the patriarch of the Bible. He didn't have an organized religion. He was promised to be the father of many nations, but he wasn't a Jew, he wasn't a Christian, and he wasn't a Muslim. He was called a Hebrew, an ivri, which means someone on the other side. He was different, he was on the other side of society. He was a seeker, he was a thinker, he was a believer. And he had an intuition and he developed an ability to tune into an inner voice that was in harmony and aligned with the will that created the universe. And his life's lesson was teaching us that we have that ability too. God promised all families of the earth will be blessed through Abraham. His blessing to us was the spiritual path that he forged. He taught every believer a way of being in the world. And it wasn't Judaism. It was a way of living in a relationship with God. That is the fundamental claim of Abraham's life and the foundation of the Bible. You can hear God in your life, not with your ears, but through guidance in your life. You can live a guided life as you develop your inner life.

And so, your soul serves as like a spiritual antenna. If you cover it up, it's not going to work very well. So the equation is really simple. The more your soul is revealed, the better the reception. And so, like food for the body, the purpose of all religions is to nourish the soul, to help it grow, help it flourish, help it shine. The Bible says we can't understand God, but the Bible promises that if we develop our inner world, we can develop a relationship with Him. And that's the goal. The relationship, it rests upon our ability to hold an inner tension to live in a state of struggle. That's why Israel is called “struggle.” It's a dynamic, living relationship of who we are now and who we could be, if we follow that inner, quiet voice that emanates from our heart.

Once that relationship with the Divine becomes just a religion or just a ritual, it's over. That's why the sages of Israel say the Torah can either be an elixir of life or a portion of death. It's one

way or the other. Once the Torah or any religion just becomes a ritual, it actually kills you spiritually.

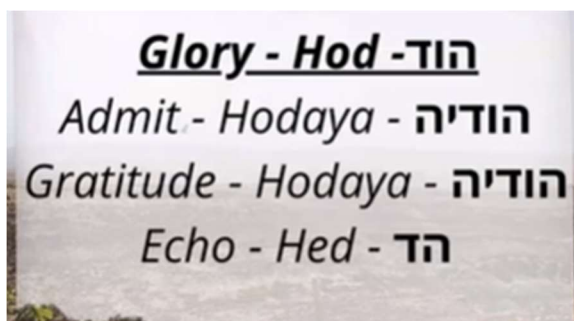
And so, the Soul Map is an attempt to push back against that religion and remind us of the relationship. To help us get in touch with our soul and through getting in touch with our soul, we get in touch with God.

And so, this week on the Soul map series, we're going to reveal our second to last hero – Aaron. The High Priest. And the goal of this series, ultimately, the goal of the book that I'm in the middle of writing, the goal of all of these sessions is that you'll be able to look at one image, one page, one formula, like an $E=MC^2$. Just something really simple. And it could fit on a magnet, it could put on your fridge, you could put it on a bumper sticker, you could put it on the back of a book. Just one look and it should remind you the entire Torah and our mission in the world. To reveal our soul and grow into who we were created to be. Can we look at the Soul Map for just a second? Let's just do a quick review.



So far we have done Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Joseph. And so, Abraham – chesed, love, giving and compassion. Isaac was gevurah that's self-sacrifice, restraint and discipline. Jacob – truth, the inner spoke that holds everything together. Moses – netzach, courage, heroic leadership, victory. Joseph we learned, as yesod, equanimity and self-mastery.

Today we're going to learn about Aaron, which is hod, which is usually translated as "glory." But that is a really poor translation. It's as good as one word could get, but there's way too many layers into Hebrew. And that's what we're going to unpack today. What is hod in our Soul Map? If we want to reveal our soul, what is that virtue that needs to be expressed? And so hod is glory. So if you wanted to say, let's say for example, your royal highness, you would say, "Hod malkutah," the glory of the King. But that word doesn't explain what it means for us in our own life. What does it mean about our soul? So first I want to explore the Hebrew word. Because Hebrew has this amazing ability to encode so many things within one word that reveal a deeper truth about reality. And so, let's start. Can we get hod up on the screen? There we are.



The same exact word, is admit and gratitude. That's deep, already we're getting somewhere. In the root of the word there, just the two letters, hed, means echo. Like when your voice goes out and it comes and bounces back at you. And so, let's go into that a little bit.

Glory, admittance, thanks, echo. Now they're all interconnected and if we can piece the pieces together, we're going to get the full picture. And then from then, all we'll need is one word, hod, and that'll tell us the whole story. So, first let's talk about hod as admittance. Now first, the ultimate acceptance is recognizing that life is a gift and at our core we should be grateful for every moment we're alive. That is giving glory to God. But just as chesed is an act of giving, if we look at that map...gevurah is an act of restraining. So there's two sides there to the spectrum. One is to give, to go out, and one is to hold back.

So too, netzach is to be courageous, to be a leader, to act. Hod is different. It's to accept reality as it is. It's to admit, this is the case. It got it, I'm surrendering now. It's an act of submission and recognition that things are out of our control. Now let's say, interpersonally, netzach would be to win. Hod is to accept. Netzach would be like, you want to win an argument, a debate with a friend? That's netzach. But hod would be to listen, to empathize, listening to the other person objectively without judgment, without your own narrative. Just listening, even being able to echo exactly where that person is. Being with them fully.

I mean, I have a funny story. There was a couple's therapy that we discovered years ago in our early 20's. It was called Imago. And when Tehila and I were in our early 20's we always went to different couple's weekends, working on our relationship and figuring things out. I had a lot of things that I needed to figure out and work on. And we were introduced to this exercise and this really therapy called Imago. And the exercise was seemingly really simple. You just had to repeat what your partner said. Tehila was supposed to say a few sentences. And then my job was to listen to what she said and then just mirror back what I heard and say what she said.

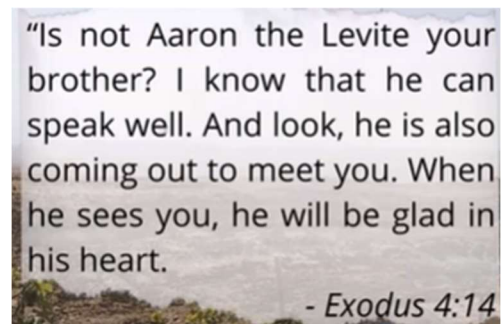
And I thought to myself, well, that's just ridiculous. Just to repeat what she says. Any monkey could just repeat something. I was so bad at Imago, I don't know what to do with myself. And of course, Tehila and I were chosen to demonstrate in front of the entire room and I was by far the worst person in the room. It was comical how bad I was. I just could not just act as an echo. I couldn't, I was like...I'm the worst listener. I couldn't listen. I'm just constantly saying whatever I want to say. I just kept on getting in the way. It was just disastrous. I don't really get embarrassed, it's hard to embarrass me. But making me do Imago in my early 20's was about as embarrassing as it gets me. And then, thank God, there was like some guy in the crowd that saved the little pride that I had left and he said this joke. He's like, "You know the

saying that Jihadist terrorists, when they go to heaven, they get 70 virgins. What do women Jihadist terrorists get? Seventy men that will actually listen to them.” And so, that sort of like broke the ice. And then the women’s like, “Ok, this couple’s not really getting this. Ok, new couple up in front of the room and they’ll teach you how to do it.”

So that sort of saved me from myself. But, that’s what it means. I’m a pretty good talker, not very good listener. So hod, is rooted in the word “echo” because that’s what it’s saying. It means to be an absolute objective reality. And an echo, not only interpersonally represents empathy, but it also represents reality. A voice goes out into the world. It’s gonna hit a wall, and then it’s gonna bounce back. Reality is unmoving. We think we can manipulate it. We think we can change things. Reality is the way reality is and it’s entirely out of our control. Albert Einstein, famously said, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results. That’s the famous Albert Einstein quote.

Yet I know in my personal life, sometimes, I like bang my head, bang my head into the same wall over and over again. I sense it mostly with my teenagers, where I’m just like banging my head into the wall here and just not working when I should admit the truth that I already know in my heart that some things are out of my control and I just need to accept reality as it is right now.

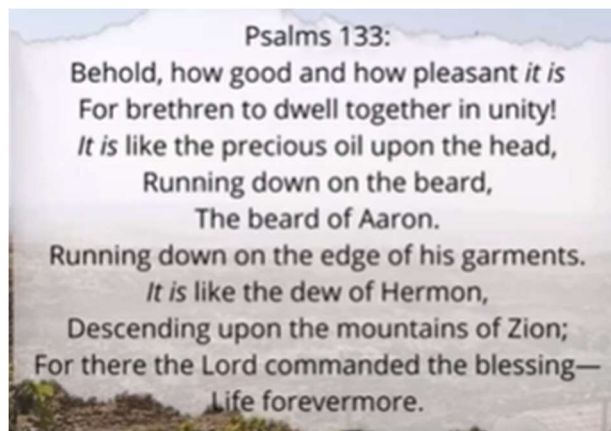
And Aaron the High Priest represented hod. He represented this attribute in the highest order. The entire book of Genesis is a contrast to Aaron. The entire book of Genesis has brothers fighting over their position. Ishmael wanted to be, then Esav wanted to be and then Jacob and then the brothers and Joseph and they’re jealous and they’re fighting, fighting, fighting, fighting, fighting. The whole book of Genesis are brothers fighting. And then here we enter into the book of Exodus and Aaron, the older brother, the more respected brother is passed over and Moses is chosen to lead the people of Israel. Aaron’s response when he sees Moses, when he sees Moses’s return, his heart is filled with joy. Look at Exodus chapter 4, verse 14. Can we get that up on the screen?



וְשִׂמְחָה בְּלִבּוֹ (he will be glad in his heart) That’s what it says in Hebrew. It was just unconditional love that Aaron showed to Moses. He accepted reality exactly what it was. He just let it be. And then he was able to love and in fact, that love captivated King David’s imagination centuries later when he wrote one of the most well-known Psalms in the world today. But people don’t always really dig deep enough because they only

read the first two sentences. They don’t really get what King David was trying to give over. And

in that we can really understand Aaron's greatness. And then Moses's greatness in turn. So let's put up on the screen Psalm 133 for a second. I love this Psalm:



Now if you don't know the story of Exodus properly, you can't possibly understand this song. What's happening here? There's oil running down the beard of Aaron. Like what's that about? The image here are two brothers, Moses and Aaron, standing before the entire nation as they prepare to inaugurate the Tabernacle. Aaron, who is the older brother was passed over, but so happy for his brother, Moses to become the leader of redeemed Israel. And now Moses was passed over and

his older brother and his children forever were chosen to become the High Priest and priests of Israel. And Moses is standing and his brother is there to take his leadership position before the people. So proud of his big brother, Moses takes the oil and anoints his big brother. It's like the ultimate picture of sibling togetherness. Brothers together, loving each other, no jealousy, just love. King David says it's like the dew of Hermon. That's the dew of the northern kingdoms of Israel, the northern tribes are from Hermon. It's like them coming upon the mountains of Zion in Judea. That's the love where God commanded the blessing to rest, life forevermore. When finally all the tribes can come together, one solid unity, one family unit, one nation.

And Aaron, he was the one that prepared the vessels for that love to exist. He lived with that, by accepting reality that Moses was chosen to be the leader. He was just truly able to be happy for his brother. And when almost every other sibling relationship ended with sibling rivalry, theirs ended in the Psalms of King David, showing the whole world what brotherly love is. In fact, we also know that Aaron so much lived with empathy in submission that he surrendered to the will of the people that assisted them to build the golden calf. I mean, Aaron wasn't punished for that. Not in Scripture, not at all. He still became the High Priest of Israel. So in Scripture's eyes, he assisted the nation of Israel to build the golden calf and he did nothing wrong there. He was living out his virtue, that he was meant to manifest. His own truth. And he did what he thought was best for Israel at that time.

The Midrash says that if he had tried to overcome and he didn't manifest his true virtue of acceptance, and he would have tried to be courageous and rise up against the people, the nation would have killed him. And the nation would have never been able to recover and repent for killing Aaron. And so, he accepted reality as it was, empathized with the nation, and he lived out that virtue for all of us to know that that is a virtue we have to be able to embody in our own lives. And I want to point something out about this map because the map is a

brilliant map and you can see a lot just by looking at it for a moment. Can we get the map up on the screen for just a minute?

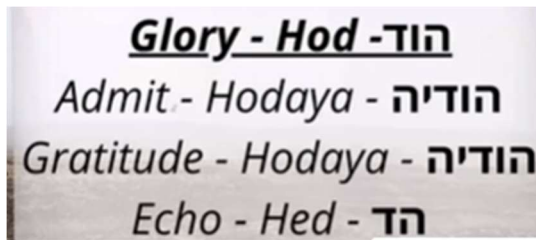


If you look on the left side of the map, you can see the gevurah of Isaac who embodied self-sacrifice and restraint. That's connected to the surrender and acceptance in the admittance of hod that Aaron represents. That's why they're above each other, both on the left side. On the right side, we see Abraham's unbridled love and giving, chesed. And then underneath that, you see Moshe, courageous leadership in victory. They're all interconnected. It's almost like a spectrum that Moses is there to act and Aaron is there to accept.

And you know there's a lot, there's you know, this map means so much to me at this point. Because I've been working on it for so long. It's already now the third page of all of my journals. And I just look at it for a few moments every day. And it just helps me align with who I want to be, what are the virtues that I want to accept upon myself? How I want to live in the world, what is the spirit that the Bible is trying to bring out in us?

And I remember when I first got the message that our vineyards were going to be destroyed. And I remember one of the partners at the farm said, "Ok, this is obviously something that's out of left field, it's beyond our world, it's something that's happening at a higher realm, we'll just pray and accept whatever the decree is." And I said, "ok, that's right for him." And then I went inside and I said, "Well really, what is, what am I supposed to do?" And what came to me was to l'natzeach. I am going to fight. I am going to win. I'm going to work as hard as I can and do whatever that I need to do, and I'm just going to draw on netzach right now. And I'm going to try to lead this battle together with Ari to fight for our vineyard with everything I got." And no, my partner didn't do anything wrong, I didn't do anything wrong. No, we're both just following our inner guidance system. But what the map helps us do is to know what are we even working with here? What are the virtues at play? The clarity and the simplicity of it all allows us to go inside and know how are we meant to live?

And so, I want to go one step deeper now to Aaron. Because more than a person, Aaron was an idea. He held this position, the High Priest and facilitated all of the spiritual service of the nation in the Tabernacle that would ultimately become the Temple. And the virtue of hod is the most fundamental idea in the worship of God. Let's get the slide back up again. Just of hod:



So I said, hod means admittance, so we spoke about that. But the next one, hodaya, is the same word as gratitude, to admit and to give thanks. Hodaya and hodaya, they're the same word. Now why is admitting the truth the same word as thank you in Hebrew? Because there is an ultimate truth to

human life. Most people forget it every once in a while. And a lot of people straight up deny it. The truth is that this life is a gift. We were given life and life can be hard. But ultimately life is so good. We didn't earn it and with all the challenges and struggles of life, we're so fortunate to have been given this gift and the proper upright response is to be mode, to admit to the truth and then to be mode, to thank our Creator for this truth, that our life is a gift. We didn't do anything to deserve the gift. Sometimes it takes a trauma, a near-death experience to wake us up, to remind us how precious life is and how much we want to be alive no matter what the challenges are. Every day with our children, every day with our spouse, every day with our loved one, we're alive, we're healthy, it's a gift. Thank you.

And you know, my father is a neurologist, an expert on the human brain. And neuroscience discovered that the brain works like a network of roads. And the more often you think along a certain neural pathway, the more well paved that pathway becomes. That's what's gonna happen. It leads to an increased tendency to repeat that same thought pattern and the cycle goes on. So the more you think in a certain way, the more you're gonna think in a certain way. And so most people have developed mental highways towards stress, fear, worry, concern, fear about the future, regretting about the past. And we have like dirt roads toward gratitude and thanks.

And if you've read my book, *The Judean Art of Waking Up*, we're guided every morning to control our thoughts and the first thought of the day, that generates the first feeling of the day is gratitude. It's the first words that come out of our mouth, "Thank you, God, for another day." And over time, the more you practice gratitude, the more you become grateful. And the happier you are. That's just the way it works. And it's ultimately, when we say it's the base of the service of all worship, a sense of gratitude it leads into another emotion. That's called indebtedness. What's indebtedness, what's the difference there? It's two different words. Indebtedness is a sense saying, "I'm being called to some sort of action to give back, I feel indebted. I'm so grateful I feel already that I have a debt that I need to repay." That feeling right there, that is the prophetic biblical orientation toward life. In the natural orientation of our soul, you admit that life is a gift, your mode, you are mode then. You're thankful for the gift that you have. So much so, we're so thankful, we want to give back. Ahh...you want to give back? Here's the Torah. Go spread the light, go help the widow in need. Go help the poor, go give your wife a hug, bring some more love into the world. You want to give back for this life? Spread the light, that's exactly, that's where the Torah comes in. It's not a law that was

imposed on us from above. It's actually something from inside us, that we're so grateful to be alive that we want to give back for the gift we've been given.

And that's why Aaron, the High Priest who represents all spiritual work, at its core is a hod, at its core is gratitude, it's the base of all service of God. That's why the sages of Israel say, all the sacrifices are going to be canceled in the future, except the korban todah, except for the sacrifice of thanks. Because at the core of every sacrifice is gratitude. And as long as we're alive, we should be thankful. And you know, the Soul Map, it's teaching us the natural state of our soul. It's thankful, like if you take away all the stuff and you just live life for a moment and you're just where you are now, not thinking about the future, not thinking about the past, and you just let life be for a moment, thank you. That's when you know you're centered again. You're just your natural self. That's why the word Yehudi, to be a Jew is to be thankful, Yehudi, l'hodot, it's all the same word – hod and Yehudi, it's all the same thing. That's why the King of Israel comes from the tribe of Judah, to teach us all that the proper posture of man in the world is to be in a state of gratitude. That's the right way to be.

And when you see people, especially young people, I'm getting old. Those young people...but you see young people now and they walk around feeling so entitled. And it rubs everyone the wrong way. Everybody's like nodding their head. Yes, yes, those millennials. Yes, yes, that is just really annoying of them. There's something wrong with feeling entitled. Like you deserve something. It's not proper, it's not upright. We can see that something is off. So gratitude, it's not just another emotion. It's a godly virtue. It's the spirit behind every mitzvah that we're commanded to do. It's the way we truly give glory to God. That's why the word hod ultimately means glory. And the way for us to shine God's light into the world is to live in that state of gratitude.

And so, with that, we now have almost the entire map out before us of how we are meant to form ourselves into the world. How we're meant to reveal our light in the world. It's like the spirit behind all of those characters are different points in our life. And every morning I wake up with kind of a decision, and I look at that map and I'm like...who do I want to be today? Because I ask myself three questions every day. What do I need to do today? What do I want to do today? And who do I want to be today? Those are three really awesome questions to ask every morning. And I do that every morning. It's a part of my prayer. And ok, what do I need to do? Everyone pretty much does that. They gotta make a to-do list of all the stuff they gotta do. What do I want to do? That's nice, it's important to remember that question, too. But the third question is really, is like a game changer. Who do I want to be today?

And when I look at the Soul Map, I'm like...who do I want to be today? I really want to be courageous today. So many people around me are fearful. I, just for today, I'm going to manifest courage. And I'm going to manifest a lot of love. I am going to love on everyone that I see today. And so the Soul Map really just helps us point directly to the virtues that we want to

be, that we need to be, that the world needs us to be. And it brings us right to the heart of it all.

And so, hod is the last one before arguably the most important one, which is King David. But that's the basis right there. It's gratitude. It's to just live with the acceptance of life as it is and whatever the challenges around us. It's gratitude. That's why Aaron and Moses, they manifested those virtues in slavery, in Egypt, in hardships. Because courage and gratitude are most important. They are most manifest when times are tough. So when times are hard, when we shine a light of gratitude, even then, it's like a neon light in the dark that shines up everyone else around us and reminds them. You know, hell is kind of depicted as a bottomless pit. And things are hard and things are challenging. It can always get worse. It can always get worse. So there is always reason to be grateful, wherever we're at. There's always room to be grateful.

And so, next time, in the very next series, we're going to meet with King David. The final and maybe most important of all of the marks on the Map. It's the attribute of Mashiach, the meda of malchut, of kingdom. And isn't that why we're all here? To fix the world in the Kingdom of God. I think that's what this fellowship is doing – one family at a time. Building the kingdom.

And so I want you all to know that you are blessed from Zion. You are a blessing to us in Israel and we pray for you every single day. Our fellowship is growing stronger, our prayers are going stronger, our farm is being built. When you come, I have to update the pictures so fast because so much is changing all the time. And the next one, I really am going to give you guys an update on all of the new changes on the farm. And I can't help but thank you for learning about hodaya or learning about hod. I just want to thank you all because we feel as though you're the spiritual net that is holding us up in the world. And somehow this network is all being connected around the mountains of King David, and we don't exactly know where it's going. But I'm so excited to see it unfold, and I'm just telling you one more time...Sukkot 2022. Just remember because it's coming. Get ready!

And so, you should always know that you are blessed from Zion.

Aaron blessing (Hebrew)

Thank you all so much.

Ari

The Special Blessing of Yitro – Truth from Lies

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6RosO3tyOc>

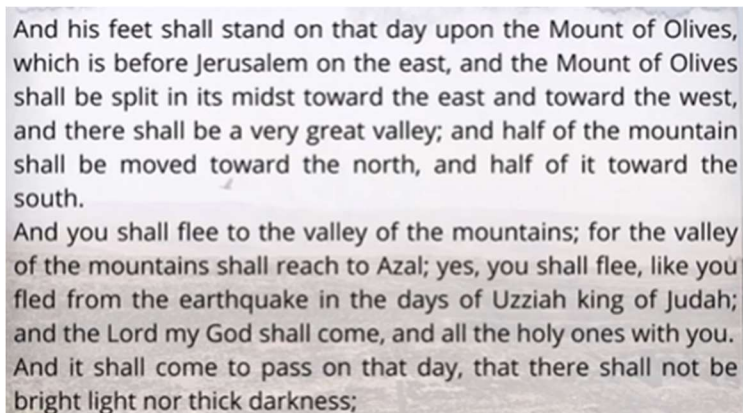
Shalom my friends. It is good to be with you. It continues to be a little bit of a rough ride for the Abramowitz family. Shortly after Jeremy and Tehila took their turn with corona, my

wonderful wife, Shaena, who just got over the flu, she came down with corona as well. And it hit her pretty hard. And now, in the last 24 hours, it appears that my turn has arrived. And it's only started now really getting me. But this is when it's time to step up. And I'm really grateful for the support system that we have out there. I got to tell you, Jeremy and Tehila have been so kind. Our partners out here at the farm have been so helpful and supportive. I've really been able to step up, I'm proud to say for Shaena. And take full-time care of Dvash with the diapers and the bath time and the bedtime, the works. And it's been hard, but the truth is, I've really, really loved it. We've really bonded, even more. And now that Shaena's up to bat taking care of me and I know that she'll do a great job. So, I haven't always had that in my life, so I really appreciate it now. And that's what we all do for each other here at the farm, and also really here in this fellowship. And that's something to be really grateful for.

Anyway, so based on the speed with which I am deteriorating, and seeing from Shaena that the nights are the hardest, I thought it was safer to pre-record this than to wait until this evening when I may not be in the condition to be able to share it at all. So, I know my friends, I know that Jeremy will laugh when I present my ideas in this way, but there's something that feels Messianic about all of this, about corona, about humanity's abject failure in controlling it and defeating it, about everything. I feel comfortable sharing this with you because I know from my correspondence with many of you, and I just know many of you, that I'm not the only one that feels like the birth pangs of Mashiach are playing out right now.

I mean, just yesterday here in Israel, there was an earthquake. People said that they felt it as far out as Jordan. It wasn't a major one, but it was a significant 4.5 on the Richter Scale. Sort of like a birth pang, smaller waves of the much greater tectonic shifts that are going to come. For just as seismologists are saying that we're due for a much greater historic earthquake here in Israel, the prophets of Israel too said that such a thing would happen in the times of Mashiach.

The prophets of Israel said for example, chapter 14 in the book of Zecharia, in Zechariah, right? It says:



And his feet shall stand on that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in its midst toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall be moved toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

And you shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal; yes, you shall flee, like you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah; and the Lord my God shall come, and all the holy ones with you. And it shall come to pass on that day, that there shall not be bright light nor thick darkness;

-Zechariah 14:4 - 6

That's what the book of Zecharia says, clearly alluding to an earthquake that's coming up.

And in the book of Isaiah, right? It says:

You shall be visited by the
Lord of hosts with thunder,
and with earthquake, and
great noise, with storm and
tempest, and the flame of
devouring fire.

-Isaiah 29:6

Meaning that these little earthquakes, I think, are part of the greater picture. That something great is coming.

And the reason that I share that with you is because there's something also very Messianic about this parsha as well, about this Torah portion. There's a certain dynamic between Yitro, between Jethro and the nation of Israel that I think is hinting to the times of Mashiach as well. Something that is very much paralleling what is happening here in this fellowship. Because our sages tell us that there was a reason that the Torah was not given until Yitro came and blessed Moshe and the nation of Israel. There was something about that blessing that was needed in order to bring the nation of Israel and the whole world to a place where the Torah could be received. Yitro needed to give that blessing.

So the Lubavitcher Rebbe of course explains this so beautifully. He points out that the Torah teaches us that Yitro, it's in the text, it says that he was the Cohen of Midian. That he wasn't just a priest of Midian, he was the High Priest of Midian. This means that he was not only intimately familiar with every single type of idolatry to which the pagan nation of Midian prayed, but he worshipped them himself. He led the worship service! He understood these false gods deeply. He knew them in the most intimate ways. And the Rebbe explains that it was from the depths of this falsehood that he was able to so profoundly elevate the truth in a way that was really unique to him, that the nation of Israel couldn't do.

He brings a verse, the Lubavitcher Rebbe brings a verse from Kohelet, from Ecclesiastes. Now to really understand this, you need to be able to understand the original Hebrew. It's definitely lost in the translation. So chapter 2, verse 13, in Ecclesiastes:

וְרָאִיתִי אֲנִי שֵׁשׁ יִתְרוֹן לַחֲכָמָה מִן־הַסִּכְלוּת

Now, it's usually translated, if you look in a normal Bible:

"I have beheld the
superiority of wisdom
over foolishness"
-Ecclesiastes 2:13

But if that was really the translation, it would have said
"מִסְכָּלוּת". The way that the Rebbe I think more accurately
translated it is:

"I have beheld the
superiority of wisdom
from foolishness"
-Ecclesiastes 2:13

מִן־הַסְכָּלוּת, not "over foolishness," but "from" it. So when
Yitro declared that HaShem is greater than all gods, that
truth, that realization was built upon the knowledge of all
these false gods that he worshipped as a foundation upon
which this great sacred truth was established. It wasn't for
nothing that he worshipped all these idols, that he embraced all these falsehoods. It was the
foundation upon which he built his altar of truth.

Instead of being punished for a lifetime of idolatry, due to the fact that when his eyes beheld
the ultimate truth and he accepted it with all of his heart, it retroactively made the whole
journey one of discovery and seeking HaShem and seeking truth. And so, why do I share all of
this with you? Why do I say this? Because if we are here together in this fellowship, most of us
probably agree that we have inherited lies to one degree or another. It doesn't make our
parents or our religious leaders liars, it makes them people who are really probably trying to do
their very best. And perhaps they share in the credit for implanting within us the courage to
shatter the idols and the illusions and the lies that we inherited in our own search for HaShem.

And in that way, we each have a little bit of Yitro in us. And just like the great redemption of
Sinai that could not come until all those years of lies were elevated to truth, in the eyes of Yitro,
so too the great redemption that we're praying for could not come before we all come together
here. We came from all over the spectrum, all different backgrounds and all different beliefs.
And we're all coming here together to declare HaShem is greater than all the gods.