

Session 130

Ki Tisa – From Purim to Passover

12 March 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-7uborWupI>

Jeremy

Alright, shalom Fellowship, welcome, welcome, welcome, it's wonderful to see you all. I was just asked, "Jeremy, are you wearing a kippah?" The answer was, "Yes, I do, but I like to keep it real. So sometimes I wear a hat, sometimes I wear this kind of kippah, sometimes I wear that kind of kippah." Because although the kippah isn't actually a Torah law, and it's not even considered like a high level rabbinic law, if you read it in the context of the Shulchan Aruch, it is the most defining reality that a Jew can put on their head. It's like he put on that kind of kippah, if this kind of color, you belong to this kind of theology and this kind of ideology, and you're this kind of person. So I just constantly try to not allow anyone to put me in a box. I actually learned that from Ari Abramowitz, who's always constantly changing his kippah as well. And I just think it's a beautiful idea. I don't want some schemata on my head to immediately put me into some kind of category. So today I'm wearing a black knit kippah, but next Fellowship I might be wearing a baseball hat, I don't know. But yes, I am wearing a kippah. I always cover my head baruch HaShem, so let's get started.

There are, I would say, wild occurrences that are happening in the Land of Israel right now. And you know, there is a movement in the world that wants to separate church and state. Let's get God over here and the State is over there. But in Israel, it's just not possible. That's like trying to swim in a pool and then take out the water. It's not really a pool then. Everything that's happening in Israel is a fulfillment of prophecy. It's a part of biblical destiny, it's all unfolding. And so you can try to separate God and the State, but what's happening in Israel now is just...it's truly remarkable, and it's marvelous to see the Divine Providence of it all. And I'm going to get into that in just a moment.

But...before we do that, what I want to do, is I want to take this opportunity with Fellowship members from the United States, and Norway, and Africa, and Holland, and Colorado, and I'm just watching the chats, and I want to just bring us all together and do what...as far as I know, I don't know of anyone else has the ability to do this, but to bring all of us together through this place, in this Land, and just lift it up to God. And so, HaShem, Master of the World, thank You for Purim, thank You for Passover that is right around the corner now, thank You for this Fellowship. We have come here today, like we do every week, to start off our week and dedicate this time to learning Torah together, to aim our lives in the right direction and realign our lives with what matters most to us. We invite You into our lives, we invite You into our homes, we invite You into our careers, we invite You into our families. We want to live out Your vision for our lives. Give us the strength, give us the faith, give us the courage to grow into who You created us to be. Please let the Torah we learn be our guiding light and Your Presence and

Your Spirit be our inner Voice that guides our choices. HaShem, bless this Fellowship, bless those that are here right now, bless those that are listening later. Bless them, bless their families, hear their prayers, and let them know that You are watching over them, guiding them, straightening their path. Let us see with our own eyes Your Presence return to Yerushalyim. Amen.

Alright my friends, what's happening in Israel now? We have to bring in some current events here because it's just historic. We are witnessing the last death throws of the hard, secular left that has ruled the country since 1948. There's a prophecy in the book of Ezekiel that says, "God will bring us back to this Land, but in the Land we will have a heart of stone." And a process needs to go through the nation to replace that heart of stone with a heart of flesh. And God will make it that we will want to follow His laws, fulfill His commandments. And we are literally watching that process happen before our eyes. There is a deep state in Israel. Israel has existed now for almost 75 years and there's a system that's in place, and the people that are higher up promote the people that are under them. And anyone that fails to like get in line with their agenda and the way that they want things to be and they don't fit in, then they don't really rise in ranks. And so there's this top echelon in Israel that run the show.

And now for the first time, the nation elected a government to fix the system, to make the system actually reflect the nation today. And it's causing absolute havoc and chaos in Israel. Heads of police are rebelling against the government, and they're trying to protect the legal system. And they're refusing to stop the demonstrations like they've stopped other political demonstrations because they sort of want this political demonstration to wreak havoc. Over 60 fighter pilots in Israel...our fighter pilots are arguably the pride and joy of Israel's Defense Forces...they said, they're not going to show up for duty. If Israel wants to change the legal court system, they're out. And I think that that was the most disgusting of all of the things that have happened. I mean, yeah, the six million of the Holocaust that died, Israel existed years before you were born. All of the people that have died in terror attacks, all of the soldiers that came before you. Now because Israel wants to change the legal system and make it a little bit more democratic that will reflect really the will of the nation, no, you're not going to serve in Israel's army anymore. It's like, went to the heart of our Defense Forces and the heart of our army. And they're trying to disrupt it.

And the latest twist...Israeli High-Tech companies who identify with the hard left in Israel, decided to literally join the BDS movement – to boycott, divest, and sanction. And they called to divest from Israel. And they called to move their money out of Israel in protest of Israel's legal reform. It was hard to imagine, but really to understand the hard-core, secular left would rather Israel be destroyed or become a Muslim state, than have Israel actually become a truly Jewish state. They so much do not want it to be Jewish, their heart is so stone-like, that they would rather just shatter it to pieces, as long as it doesn't actually become a Jewish State. And so right now, they're doing everything in their power to stop this government from making

Israel more democratic. But Jeremy, more democratic? The protests, they're all saying, "You're ruining democracy!" All of the articles are saying the legal reform is destroying democracy. The protests are fighting in the name of democracy. How can you say they're destroying democracy? How does this make any sense?" Isn't that something? Isn't that something? It's not the hard left in Israel. They're not just lying, it's not that what they're saying is not true, it is the anti-truth. It's the opposite of the truth. It's an incredible tactic. Because we're arguing with a side that has so reframed the conversation, so totally transformed our own words, that the conversation we're left with is just dumbfounded. We just have to like fall on our faces, because we don't even know how to begin the argument.

Ari

Jeremy, Jeremy, can I ask you a question? Sorry to interrupt. Just a question. I obviously agree with what you're saying wholeheartedly. But I've been seeing a lot of people that we know, friends of ours, religious, god-fearing Jews who were protesting against the reforms in Judea and Efrat. I don't understand it. I really don't understand it. Can you explain to me how what you're saying is so clearly and obviously true? At least in my very limited intellect and understanding that there's still people that we would expect to be on our side that are arguing the other way? Can you explain that?

Jeremy

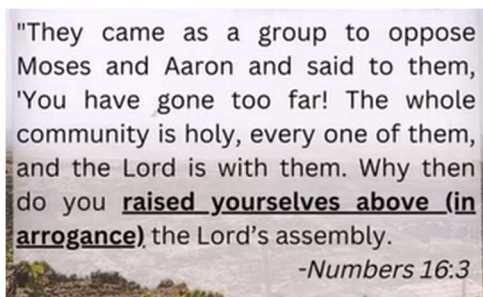
You know, the Jews were feasting at Achashverosh's meal, using the utensils of the Temple, but the food was kosher. It's just so much easier to side with the strong, to side with the elite, to side with the Biden administration, to side with... "Ok, we're with you. We're with the strong. We don't want to be the underdog. Who wants to be the underdog?" And so I just feel like it's a lack of moral character, it's a lack of integrity, and the chutzpah to say that they are fighting in the name of democracy, where the system is just making the courts being elected more democratic...it's making it more reflective of the nation. That's just...the chutzpah is beyond belief. But what's so incredible is watch this. The Torah describes exactly this scenario. That when evil comes to attack Israel, it takes the truth and it comes at it as the anti-truth. The exact opposite, it's unbelievable.

So look. We look at the Torah and we're told about Moses, the greatest of all prophets in the Hebrew Bible. Moses isn't smart. The Torah doesn't say that he's strong, the Torah doesn't say that he's extra compassionate. The Torah says one thing about Moses. It says it in Numbers, chapter 12, verse 3. Here's what it says:

"Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth."
-Numbers 12:3

So the one attribute that the Torah describes of Moses in the book of Numbers is that he was the most humble of all people. Not the smartest, not the strongest, the most humble. And then just a few chapters later, Numbers chapter 16, verse 3, when a small group of

people try to get power from Moses, look at what they say...Numbers chapter 16, verse 3. Here's what it says:



"They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, 'You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is with them. Why then do you raised yourselves above (in arrogance) the Lord's assembly. -Numbers 16:3

Mitnaseh, literally means, "Why are you so arrogant in thinking that your tribe of Levi should be so holy?" Korach says, "No, no, no. We're all equal people here." And what did he just do? He was literally just called the most humble man on the planet. And says, "Why are you so arrogant?" But...like, what is Moses supposed to say to that? He's literally taking the anti-truth. So what

does Moses do? He falls on his face, he's like, "I don't even know how to answer, it's so not true, it's anti-true. It's not just a lie, it's like the opposite tactic.

And that's exactly what we're seeing today right now. The left that's trying to get power, just like Korah was trying to get power, almost with the same scenario. "Oh, we should all... we're fighting for democracy. We're fighting for everyone's rights in Israel." So this small elite can maintain their power cause that's really what Korach wanted. He wanted the power. And then, calling the most humble man on the planet the most arrogant, it's like, what do you do with that? And then look at what happened. Korach was swallowed up by the ground. You guys all know that story? That's a great story.

Now look at what happened last week in Israel. Israeli High-Tech companies that identify with the hard left, they decided to join the BDS movement and to divest from Israel. And they publicly called for other companies to follow. Let's destroy Israel's economy. Let's force this government to stop the legal reform. They're going to try to destroy Israel's economy, to pressure the government to stop. And this tiny, violent group, they're waging war on Israel on every front that they can. And they move all of their money out of Israel. Billions of dollars were moved out of Israel.

And then something happened in America last week. Silicon Valley Bank defaulted last week. It's the second largest bank failure in US history. Do you know where the Israeli High-Tech BDS companies put their funds? Yep, you go it. To Silicon Valley Bank. Now, I don't know, it was like swallowed up into the ground. Of all of the banks of the world that they could have moved their money to, they could have moved it to Oklahoma, they could have moved it to Wall Street, they could have moved it to Switzerland, they could have moved it to anywhere. The one bank that they chose to move all their money to, to try to seize power like Korach, was swallowed up by the ground.

And here's where it gets really good. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Saturday night that his government will take steps to protect Israel-based High Tech companies affected by the crash of the bank, but only companies that have their businesses centered in

Israel. And so now, what has he done? It's like you want to see the living God of Israel interact with the world and guide His people? Watch this small group of people try to curse Israel and take their money out of Israel to try to collapse Israel's economy. And then the one bank they chose is the one bank that defaults and swallows all of their money? It's like, Wow! Just keep your eyes on Israel and you will see signs and wonders like no other country. The providence is so glaring, it's like of all of the banks, they chose the one Silicon Valley Bank which of course, Silicon Valley is like the heart of WOKE America, and that's the one bank that defaulted. It's like this small group of power-hungry people, they tried to hurt all of Israel, tried to destroy people's jobs, to maintain their own power, and their money was swallowed up like Korach and his rebellion. And that is something that is absolutely remarkable.

And if you don't really read the Torah alongside while watching the current events in Israel, you can't really see the marvel and wonder of it all. So if you're not really tapped into the Torah portion, you're not really reading the Tanakh, then the current events in Israel, they're just like another news story. But once you connect the dots, Israel becomes the most fascinating country in the world because God is quite literally interacting with us on...like a biblical saga is unfolding, if we just have the eyes to see it.

Alright, enough of current events. I want to now go deeper, deeper, deeper into the Torah. So I want to invite Rabbi Ari Abramowitz to share his insights and his wisdom with us today. And so, Ari, you now have the microphone.

Ari

Thank you, Jeremy. Shalom everybody. It's really, really good to see all of you. It's always good, but it's right now more comforting than usually. And Jeremy was talking about what's happening with the whole nation. How HaShem is replacing our hearts of stone with a heart of flesh and how the parsha really talks about what's playing out in the nation itself. That the Torah is the wisdom of HaShem, unlimited dimensions. So it's not only on a national level, but each of our own lives. And I have no choice but to really zoom in on what's happening right now with me. At least that's how I feel, because when I dig deep that's all that comes out because what's been really happening with me, personally.

You know over the past number of sessions, we've returned quite often to the subject of faith and doubt. Really not just the past few sessions, we've really been talking about this since day one of the Fellowship, I think, faith and doubt. In some ways I think that's what the Fellowship is about to some degree. It's definitely one of the main themes. Well 12 days ago, my father was admitted to the emergency room in the Intensive Care Unit in the hospital. This is not his first time in the hospital, but this is by far the worst and the most serious. And my life has pretty much been divided up between spending the night next to him, next to his hospital bed, tending to him with all of my heart, with all of my soul, the best way I know how. And then, just spending the next day recovering from the last night, being next to his hospital bed,

tending to him the best way I know how. And it's been definitely one of the hardest things I've ever done. At least emotionally. You know, not only for me, but for my mother, but particularly my sisters who have been courageously, valiantly, really rising to the occasion at the expense of their families and their jobs. And that's been heart-wrenching. I don't know if any of you have had to experience this, but you know, seeing my father's excruciating suffering and knowing that there's nothing I can do but simply hold him close and embrace him. It's like a pain unlike anything I've ever felt and I really don't think I will ever be the same after this. And the truth is, I don't think I'm supposed to be the same. If an experience like this doesn't change you, then something I think is definitely wrong with you, I think, I don't know. I don't know much.

But anyways, HaShem has blessed me in a lot of this journey. Not only that I'm able to see the tremendous opportunity that this is, to honor my father and to be there for him, the way he's been there for me his entire life. But also really to rise to the occasion in a way that I don't think I would have been able to do without Divine assistance. But despite all of that, despite all of that sort of clarity, I've been experiencing emotions that I don't know I can clearly define, because I'm in the midst of it. You know, I would have wanted to share some sort of other devar Torah, but I remember when I was in the army, and then I would go to someone's house for Shabbat and they would want to talk. I couldn't talk about anything but the army. Cause it was so all-encompassing. What else do I have to talk about? That's my whole reality.

This has been my whole reality. So I'm in the midst of it right now, so I don't know how to clearly define everything that I'm talking to you about, but I don't want that to hold me back from sharing. But I can say that the emotions that I've been feeling are in the family of that five letter word that we just don't like to say. And that's doubt. You know, while I have moments of intellectual clarity, that things are happening exactly as they're supposed to happen. On a deeper and more visceral level, I found myself wound up in knots. You know I'm bursting out in tears many times throughout the days. I go around listening to classes, listening to things. If I shut off the noise in my ears for even a few minutes, I'll just burst out...not just crying, often weeping. And I think that for...it's far more difficult than, you know, recovering from these sleepless nights, is recovering from the trauma of what I'm experiencing. And recovering from the fear, of everything that's happening right now, that's happening to him. Cause even if, please God, he makes it through this, his body has taken a beating. You know the doctors are telling us that it's a balancing act between his heart and his lungs and his kidneys. And if I'm going to be truthful, his body is just weakening. It's failing. It was never supposed to make it, anywhere near this long. And I've told you before, he developed juvenile diabetes at the age of 8. He wasn't supposed to make it far past the age of 30. And now they've put him in the geriatric ward. I keep telling him that's something in and of itself, we should just be celebrating the fact that he's in the geriatric ward. He made it! He made it!

But anyways, despite all of the perspective of gratitude, the pain is just like so intense. And so I've been trying to look within. Trying to see what I think is of the blemish in my emunah, in my bitachon, in my trust and my faith that is manifesting, you know all of this fear and this pain and this anxiety. I don't know how else to explain it. And the deeper I look, the more I've been concluding that at least a big part of it comes from simply not knowing. Right? When my father does leave the world, may it be at 120, when he does leave, where is he going? Will he retain his own character and identity in the next world or will he be subsumed into HaShem's undifferentiated light and unity? And then he'll be lost or gone...will he be afraid? Will he know what's happening with me and with us? And if so, will we ever be together again? What would even happen to him? I want to understand, I want to understand it and I don't understand it. I didn't think that I needed to understand it before, but now I find myself really wanting and needing to understand it. And this huge gap in my understanding and my comprehension is being filled with fear and doubt and anxiety. I know at least that's a very big part of it.

And then in comes the Torah. In comes the parsha. And you know, HaShem makes it. That the parsha, like Jeremy said, it speaks to us where we're at. Nationally, personally, and if we don't see it, we're just not looking closely enough. So ultimately, it was the teaching of our beloved Rav Ya'acov Nagen, Jeremy spends a lot more time learning from Rav Nagen than I have. But you know Rav Nagen, recently himself miraculously recovered from a life-threatening brain bleed. And thank God, Baruch HaShem he recovered. Anyways, he shared a teaching that really brought me a semblance of peace. Or at least I felt was a heightened and more expanded self-awareness, which I'm starting to believe is a pre-requisite for peace. At least internal peace.

So the sages, the sages of Israel, they look at the Torah portion, particularly the part about the golden calf, and through the words used to describe the calf itself, they're able to teach us the deepest motivations of the nation and how we too may have those same qualities ourselves. I can say right now that I definitely do. So let's do math. Moses goes up the mountain. He was supposed to be gone for 40 days. And as he disappears up the mountain, the nation begins an anxiety filled count-down. And when you're filled with anxiety and fear, you don't see anything clearly and they miscount. We'll skip all the details. The bottom line is they miscounted. And being that they're so riddled with all of this fear and just filled with all this anxiety. The moment that their mistaken count ends, they build an idol. They built a golden calf. And they declare...this is chapter 32, verses 1 and then 4:

And when the people saw that Moshe delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up! Make us a god that shall go before us. For as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him." And he made a molten calf. And he said, "These, ele, these, are your gods O Israel which brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

Now let's look at the Hebrew of the first verse of chapter 32. The nation goes to Aaron. And they say, "Make us an Elohim that will go before us. We don't know what happened to Moshe." Now we can't go into the identities and the concepts behind the different names of HaShem in depth at each Fellowship, this would just take up every single Fellowship. So we're going to have to rely on what we've taught in the past. But the word "Elohim" has implication of a Divine conduit, or a channel through which HaShem manifests in the world. But the sages take that word Elohim and they divide it up into two component parts which I never really seen it divided that way before. And it spoke to me in a really deep way.



You see this slide? The word "Elohim" they teach, consists of the word "ele," which means "these" and "mi" which means "who." One part, these, ele, it's a declarative word. Ele! Look, these, right here, that's it, right there. And one part is "mi," question "mi," which is "who." It's an open and unanswered question. Ele, these, are the facets of God which can be demonstrated on some level. They can be understood on

some level that you could see, right there. Ele, this is your God, O Israel.

Whereas, "mi," the rest of the word from Elohim, "mi – who" is a question that our finite brains cannot possible comprehend and understand. It's not fathomable, and it simply cannot be described. So, understanding this distinction can help us understand what was happening in the terrified hearts of the people. They were simply overtaken by an emotion which, after this week, I could empathize, I could empathize with it. Really, in a way that I never could before. The people declare, "Ele," right? Ele – these. Ele are your gods, O Israel. What was missing from that word? Mi. Mi! Who! The question, the mystery. The mystery that is beyond their comprehension. They didn't want to have to deal with the fear and helplessness and vulnerability that comes with relating to a god that they couldn't see, which they couldn't perceive, which they couldn't understand. They wanted to have some semblance of control. So they created "ele – these," a god that they could control and that they could understand. The sin of the people is that they gave into their deep desire to understand it all. To remove the mystery and the questions and even the doubts about HaShem.

I remember Shaena and I were at someone's house and the wife said, "I want to have my friend over for coffee." She said, "Do you ever wonder?" I said, "No, no, I don't wonder. I just don't wonder. I don't want to wonder." Right? The nation wanted to remove the mystery and questions and even the doubts about HaShem. To make HaShem something that they could understand and demonstrate and relate to, with a set of rules and principles that was both comprehensible to them and also while they're at it, why not make it appealing to them as well. Because we know about the debauchery that was happening around this golden calf. They wanted a tangible, accessible god that they could fully understand. Not a transient,

transcendent, invisible one, that they couldn't understand. And when Moshe descends the mountain, right? He's furious and he shattered the luchot, the tablets.

"Who is on Hashem's side, come to me!"
-Exodus 32:26

And he bellows out, "Mi l'HaShem, eli?" What does that mean? Mi, the first word is mi! Who! Who is on HaShem's side, come to me. Moshe's answer to their terrible, but very human sin was to restore the "mi," the question, the mystery, the ineffable lack of understanding to the "ele," to that which could be understood. To make

Elohim whole and complete and real again.

Which is why as Rav Nagin beautifully explains...are you ready for this? That the fixing of the sin of the golden calf, the fixing of the sin of the golden calf is the mitzvah of the red heifer. Which is the greatest and most extreme example of a chok. Right? A chok is a law that there is no rational explanation that we understand. It needed to be a law like that that we could not possibly understand, that fixed the sin of the golden calf.

Anyways, so here I am. And all of my beloved mantras that I share with you all the time, however true and beautiful they may be, have been failing me. Ele, here they are. I have my mantras and they're supposed to make everything better. And right when I feel like my faith is strong and unwavering and I've got it down, something new, out of my comfort zone, out of my tool-box. It makes my faith seem lacking and incomplete and insufficient. What used to be enough is no longer enough. You know, my precious mantras, my equations, they're all just not doing anything. And I find myself grasping in the darkness.

And then, either through real work or prayer or davening or your prayers for me or just a free, Divine gift, my faith starts little by little, here and there, starts to expand. And my consciousness is expanded. And I feel moments, there are moments where I feel closer to HaShem than I did on the other side of this crisis. Where I felt like I had it figured out and now I don't have it figured out. For some reason I feel closer to HaShem now, in those moments. That the "mi," the "who," that question, the unlimited dimension of HaShem that I completely and totally don't understand. These dimensions that I don't get are revealing themselves to me in all their mystery and in all their glory and I'm starting to feel that HaShem is giving me a gift throughout all of this. It's very painful, but it's a gift. He's taking me out of my comfort zone and out of my realm of comprehension and He's inviting me to meet Him in this place of confusion and disorientation and mystery. HaShem doesn't want our relationship to be dry and predictable and fully understandable. He wants a true relationship, He wants a loving relationship, a dynamic relationship, and there's a price for that. But I really believe it's a price worth paying. I know it's a price worth paying.

And in the end, the human condition, it's inherently vulnerable, it's inherently mysterious. And that's what makes it beautiful, and that's what makes it rich, and that's what makes it worthwhile and that's what makes it real. And so I want to bless all of us my friends, that we're able to really wholeheartedly embrace the mystery and the vulnerability of our existence. And by doing that, we're able to forge a deep and loving and trusting, real relationship with HaShem. Because in the end, that's really, that's all that matters in this brief lifetime of ours, is really to forge that true relationship. And by really connecting with HaShem, having chesed and love for each other and for all of His creation. Sorry, Jeremy, if I went on and on there. I just had to share my heart. Back to you, Jeremy.

Jeremy

No, Ari, you're just such a good guy. You're just good, and everyone goes through hard times. You said something that really touched my heart. You said, "What used to be enough, is no longer enough." And I feel like that's just going to be true in everyone's life. And so we kind of have to be like, "Ok, this is enough now. I'm comfortable here." And then it's likeummm...you really can't stay comfortable for too long because everything that's alive is going to be growing. And growing inherently, there's like uncomfortable. It's like, growing pains. Just HaShem...

Ari

Jeremy, I do want to share one thing with you. And that is that I should give you credit here. Because I remember we were taking a jog, maybe a few months ago, and you were saying to me, "Ari, you know we're in that age that this is where it starts happening. Difficult things happening, start losing parents." And you're like, "I've really stepped up my game as far as strengthening myself, emotionally, spiritually, and really physically." You remember this conversation?

Jeremy

Yeah.

Ari

You said this to me? And you said, "I've been strengthening myself physically, so I'm able to be there. A source of strength and a rock for my family that needs me." And that really had an effect on me. And I think that what I was able to do since then...cause that's really helped me through this. It scares me to think what I would feel like if I was just like weak on every level right now. So I want to thank you for that.

Jeremy

Wow, well that's good to know. Yeah, what I've been doing lately, just one hour a day, I dedicate to my physical being. And in that one hour, I make sure that I suffer. I force myself to do something that I don't want to do. That hurts, that's unpleasant, that's uncomfortable, and I

try then in that physical labor, it's a spiritual work. To just strengthen my body and then with a strong body, there's a strong mind that's able to like live through that long-distance run, or lift up that heavy thing. And then hopefully, if we have a strong body and a strong mind, when the flood comes, hopefully we'll be strong all around, to be strong for the people that we love around us. And so, you should be strong...strength and courage, that's for sure, that's what we all need.

Alright, so now, I want to change gears and I'm often told by Tehila, I'm not talking fast enough because her brain is operating at a quicker, faster, pace that I just can't keep up. Sometimes when I send her a voice message on WhatsApp, I think about the message first and I try to say it as quickly as I can. Because I know that she likes me to speak quickly. So when we're just existing, I just have to speak the way that I speak. But on WhatsApp, I try to do what she likes, and that is to speak quickly. And so, she's just so smart and she's so brilliant and she's so wonderful, and she is a gift to everyone that knows her and to this Fellowship, and so she has some beautiful ideas on the Torah. And we were learning the Torah pretty much all Shabbat.

We had this one Catholic young man, 28, from Poland, who is currently living on the Farm. He just sort of showed up, and that's happening now. And he is shepherding our sheep and the truth is, I haven't had many opportunities to have deep conversations with Catholics, and it's been really fascinating. He had both meals by me for Shabbat and just the whole Shabbat was just long, long, long, Torah discussions, sort of bridging a pretty big gap there between orthodox Jews and Catholics in Poland. Like there's a lot in between. And so Tehila just had some marvelous ideas. So you will absolutely love the Torah here. So I'm going to pass it over to Tehila right now.

Tehila

Hi everybody. I want to discuss something that's sort of at the intersection between last week's portion of Ki Tisa and this upcoming portion of Vayakel, which we're going to read together with the portion of Pekudei. You know, we get so wrapped up in the golden calf because it's like this nightmare unfolding in the midst of our honeymoon of revelation from HaShem at Sinai. And then it's interrupted with this horrible event. It's so gripping, that I think the rest of the story, a lot of times gets kind of lost in the shuffle. Cause around the story of the golden calf, there are two bookends that are essentially the same subject. In Ki Tisa, we have these two stories unfolding parallel. Moshe's up on the mountain with HaShem for 40 days. On the last day we have the golden calf unfolding, but there's this kind of final conversation between Moshe and HaShem. And we know that there's no prophecy that ever came close to this kind of prophecy that Moshe's having where someone spoke to HaShem, like directly in that kind of way.

And now before Moshe goes back from this revelation to the earthly reality, HaShem tells him about building the Tabernacle, and there's one kind of last message. Now what would you

guess that last message would be? Maybe a blessing, leadership advice. But no, HaShem tells Moshe about Shabbat. Well that's weird. We've heard about Shabbat so many times already. We heard about Shabbat in Genesis/Breishet when the world was created. And we hear about it in the manna when HaShem says, "Don't take extra, don't take manna on Shabbat. You have to take extra on Friday, I'll give you enough that will last you for Shabbat." Then we see it again in the Ten Commandments. And you know there are two verses in the Ten Commandments in Exodus and in Deuteronomy. And in one version we hear "shamor," and in the other version we hear, "zakor." The sages teach us that these words zakor – to commemorate the Shabbat, and shamor- to guard the Shabbat, were spoken by HaShem at the same time. A lot of people understand that as symbolizing the positive and the negative commandments. The things that you must do on Shabbat, and the things you must not do on Shabbat. So we get all of that in the Ten Commandments.

Then we hear about Shabbat again in the Torah portion of Mishpatim, where we hear the social perspective. Where you have to let your servants rest and your animals rest. So it seems like we've just come at this from every possible angle. Why is Hashem bringing up Shabbat again? And why is it the very last thing that Moshe needs to hear in his revelation. Let's look together at the verses. In verse 12, it says:

And you speak to the children of Israel and say, "Only keep my Sabbaths for it is a sign between Me and you for your generations to know that I the Lord, make you holy. Therefore keep the Shabbat, for it is a sacred thing for you. Those that desecrate it shall be put to death. Or whoever performs work on it, that soul shall be cut off from the midst of its people."

It doesn't stop there. It keeps on going. It says:

Six days work may be done, but on the 7th day, it is a day of Shabbat, a complete rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever performs work on the Shabbat, they shall be put to death. Thus shall the children of Israel observe the Shabbat, to make the Shabbat, as an everlasting covenant between Me and the children of Israel. It is forever a sign that in six days the Lord created the heaven and the earth, and on the 7th day, He ceased and rested.

What are we seeing here? What is being added? It's a good question, right? And then again, you would think that was enough. After the sin of the calf, and right before commanding the people about the Tabernacle, Moshe goes back into it. This coming parsha of Vayakel starts with Moshe again telling the people about Shabbat. The Torah could have just said, "Well, Moshe spoke to the people all that HaShem commanded," but then Moshe tells them about this again. It's really marvelous. Why are these two stories of Shabbat being told again and why are they being told right after the revelation? They're interrupted by the golden calf, but it would seem that had it not been for the golden calf, the sort of development of the story would have been that Moshe finishes the revelation, 40 days up at Sinai, and then HaShem talks to

him about Shabbat and then he conveys that to the people. It's interrupted by the calf story, but it seems like Shabbat here is actually meant to be the main conversation that follows revelation.

So here are the questions. What is different here? What are we getting new? Why do we need to hear more about Shabbat? And why is this the message that we need now?

So I want to look more closely at those verses that I just read. Because there are a few new concepts that we meet here that we haven't met before. Up until now, Shabbat was a commandment and it was a commemoration of God's creation and God resting and so you know, God rested, so we rest, we have to let our servants rest. But here we meet for the first time that this Shabbat is holy. It says in verse 13, "Keep the Shabbat for I am the Lord who makes you holy. And if you desecrate the Shabbat, you will be punished." Meaning, the term desecrate obviously it can only be used regarding something that's holy because you're making something unholy. That's what desecrate means. You can't desecrate something that's not holy to begin with. So that's interesting. For you and I, we kind of take that as a given. That's obvious. Of course Shabbat is a holy day.

But put yourselves in the shoes of the Israelites. Up until now, they've just been told what to do on Shabbat. No one ever told them that it's holy. Don't work, rest, don't take manna, don't let your servants work. What's holy about that? It's just stuff you're allowed to do and something you're not allowed to do. It's like, we keep kosher, but it doesn't mean that everything we eat is specifically holy, right? The priests eat holy food, but we could just eat regular food as long as we're keeping it kosher, right? There are many commandments like that. If you wear clothing that doesn't have mixtures of wool and linen, you're following a mitzvah. But it doesn't mean that the clothes that you're wearing are of any kind of specific holiness. You're just not breaking the rules.

So here, we have this idea of holiness appearing for the first time. Then the verses keep going and we meet a new verb regarding Shabbat that we haven't seen before either. It says in verse 16, "Thus shall the children of Israel observe the Shabbat to make the Shabbat." La'asot et haShabbat, it says in Hebrew. Throughout their generations, as an everlasting covenant. "Make the Shabbat" is a new term. As I said before, we've seen "zakor," which is to remember the Shabbat. And we've seen "shamor," which is to guard the Shabbat. What does it even mean "to make" the Shabbat? If the Hebrew word is la'asot, it's like to do something, to make something. How do you "make" Shabbat? Isn't Shabbat a fact, it's just a day. I don't make a day. How would I make a day? The day just exists.

And the third term that we meet here for the first time is Shabbat is a covenant. You know, there are 613 commandments in the Torah and not so many of them are covenants. We have circumcision, I can't really think of any other commandments besides for that that are

covenants, like Shabbat here. And up until now, we would have just thought that Shabbat is a commandment. We didn't know that that was some kind of special covenant, some sort of covenantal relationship that we have with HaShem through this commandment.

So now, when we look at it and put it all together, what's new here? We have a whole new perspective on Shabbat that's being given over that wasn't given before. We have holiness, that's HaShem's job. HaShem plants that there, HaShem plants holiness. It's like a spark of potential buried in the fabric of time itself. And then there's the la'asot, to make, to do. That's the verb of what we're supposed to do. To make Shabbat. And then the meeting place of the potential that HaShem plants and something that we're supposed to do, that meeting place creates covenant.

Now I know I spoke about this before, but it just reminds me and so I want to mention it again. There are three types of water sources in Israel. There's the spring, the well, and the cistern. And in a lot of Israel, you have springs. You don't do anything, you're just walking in the desert and they pop up. We went out with Yessi our partner to the desert on Friday and he just took us through the desert, up and down the mountains, and we're driving through and he turns left at some ditch, and then...there was a spring right there.

And then you have cisterns. Cisterns are something that people dig. They're holes that people dig in the ground to collect rainwater. It's just... that's all you. But it's interesting that all the marriages, the big famous marriages in Genesis and all around, what the patriarchs are doing, they're all around wells. We hear so much about wells. Why is a well important? Because a well is interesting. It's like a combination of those two things. There's the effort that you put in to digging the well. But, unlike a cistern, the well is not going to work unless HaShem planted water there to begin with. That's why wells are so special. Because it's the meeting place between our effort and the potential that HaShem put there. And that's what we have on Shabbat. HaShem plants holiness in the day, but you don't tap into the holiness unless you dig. You have "to make" Shabbat, "to do" Shabbat. And HaShem uses this verb here that's different than the verb that He uses keeping the commandments. There's some sort of digging into the inherent holiness of the day, that's something beyond keeping the laws. Because HaShem uses a different word about keeping the laws. It's something you make of Shabbat that's a meeting between the holiness and something that you do. It hits the spot and creates an everlasting covenant that's beyond keeping the laws.

So I'm scratching my head, what does that mean? How do we "make" Shabbat? Well there's another place in the Bible that we see these words again. La'asot, to make, in the context of Shabbat, alongside the word, kodesh-holy. That's an opposite meaning. Look in Isaiah 58:13. It says:

If you restrain your foot because of the Sabbath, from performing your affairs on My holy day, you call the Shabbat a delight, the holy of the Lord honored, and you honor it by not doing your wanted ways, by not pursuing your affairs and speaking words.

So here we have this combination again of what we do. It says, “la’asot,” right? To do the things that you would normally do. And you’re not supposed to do those things on HaShem’s holy day. So Isaiah is telling us what not to do. Not to perform your normal affairs on Shabbat because it’s a holy day. Don’t pursue your normal activities. Don’t speak your normal words, He tells us. So by the end verse, we can understand what you do do on Shabbat. You do Shabbat, you make Shabbat, by doing the opposite of your normal affairs. This is really important because you can technically keep Shabbat and not really experience Shabbat at all. You can surely make sure not to turn on electricity, not to carry things outside, not to light a fire. But you could just be talking about the ballgame, have a timer that switches on your TV, watch the news. You can keep every law in the book and you didn’t even touch the covenant side of Shabbat that HaShem is talking about here.

Now it’s also really important because a lot of people say, “Wait. What is Shabbat for me if I’m not Jewish for example? Maybe I’m not required to keep all the details of the laws and not turn on the lights and not carry. So do I not have Shabbat?” HaShem is giving here a whole other perspective, a whole other aspect about Shabbat beyond the guarding of Shabbat, of guarding the laws. He says there’s a whole other element that’s the covenantal element. Something else that’s been meeting between the inherent holiness that HaShem hid in time and can go completely undetected if you don’t dig, if you don’t dig that well. And that means setting aside Shabbat and making Shabbat...make it “la’asot” Shabbat. To make Shabbat by not doing what you would normally do. Focusing on the Spirit, focusing on the holiness on Torah, not your normal activities. And that is what HaShem calls an everlasting covenant.

And that can look different for different people. But you know it. You know it when you feel it. It’s like you have to experience it to know that you’ve gotten there. And you know, it’s something a struggle for me. Like on Shabbat, of course we keep Shabbat. We keep the rules. But as a mom, there are a lot of things to just be like “day to day” stuff that keep on ticking. I have to feed the kids so instead of making new food, I feed them the food I made yesterday, but it’s not like always totally different. I can sometimes keep the laws and just not really feel like I’m in the Shabbat spirit. Right? And so, if I’m reading a book all week long, I keep on reading that book on Shabbat. There’s no real rule against it. Nothing technically preventing me from doing that. I can chat about my work and talk about the news.

But then when I realized from this reading that there’s this whole new aspect of Shabbat, it really changed my past Shabbat yesterday. And you know, every moment of the day, I kept thinking, “How can I not do ‘normal’ and do something special? So for me, that really like...for everybody it can be something different, but for me that inspired me. I invited the families of

the Farm over after prayers. I said, "Ok, I'll provide the food, but I want everybody to come and share a Torah idea." And we all sat together and every person was just sharing a different idea that spoke to them from the Torah portion. And in the afternoon, that meant learning Torah rather than just reading the newspaper. And you know, so for every person it can be different, but there's something beyond "guarding" the Shabbat and turning it into a covenant that I think it's the special message of this portion.

But then the question is, why is that so important? Specifically now as the last thing that HaShem says to Moshe in sort of the return to normal life after revelation? And this I learned from Rabbi Fohrman this week. You know, the revelation is when we heard HaShem speaking to us directly. And then, Moshe like unbelievably goes up to Sinai and it's this moment in history that can never really be recreated. It's like, this actual meeting with HaShem. But it's our job to recreate it to the best of our ability and to maintain the memory of that. So, you know, Rabbi Fohrman says that the revelation was this transcendence beyond space and time. Moshe went up for 40 days, it says he didn't eat or drink, meaning he transcended time. He didn't feel time passing in the way that we think about it. And he went up in the cloud. What is the cloud? The cloud is symbolic of HaShem's Presence. So it's like he went past physical space into HaShem's space as it were.

And so we can't do that simultaneously. We can't always have revelation where we transcend space and time. But maybe we can do those things separately. We can have space that transcends space, that's the Tabernacle. It's like a space that's in this world. But we are able to connect from there to HaShem's space. And then we have a space in time. Where we're able to transcend regular time and connect with HaShem beyond time. And that, you know, It doesn't say about the Tabernacle or the Temple that they're an everlasting covenant. Because they can be destroyed, they're physical. But Shabbat can never be destroyed and that's why it's an everlasting covenant. Because it recreates the covenant, the revelation that we have with HaShem at Sinai. That relationship that was forged. We maintain it by the space that we create in time on Shabbat.

And it's like, you know, it's like at the end of the revelation and going back into normal life as it were, HaShem is like comforting Moshe and comforting the people saying, "Yes, we have this revelation and yes, we're going back into regular life. BUT...it's not the end because I'm creating for you. I'm planting a little bit of this revelation every week, in Shabbat, so you can tap into it. You'll have it forever. This is an everlasting covenant. Because as long as there is time, there will always be the ability to have our Sinai moment with HaShem in this time that's so special and transcendent. But it depends on us making it. So I hope that that lights up your Shabbats the way that it lit my Shabbat. And with that, I wish everybody a beautiful week. Bye, guys!

Jeremy

Thank you, Tehila, thank you, thank you, thank you. We did have an awesome Shabbat on the Farm, it's true. I love Shabbat on the Farm. I hate leaving the Farm for Shabbat. If I'm in Israel, it's really hard to get me out of the Farm. I just love it there. And Tehila, this Shabbat, her cholent was out of this world. Ari, right? Cholent amazing? Best cholent ever!

Alright, so now I want to go deeper into the Torah. And I want to talk about the sin of the golden calf, the recovery from that sin, what it all means. And I want to start with just kind of a bird's eye view. I want to ask a question that I think people don't ask. We sort of take it for granted and I'm going to watch your faces as I ask this question. Because it's a question that really needs to be asked. So, we have these two leaders. We have Moses and we have Aaron. We have one man who's speaking face to face with God, who's sort of like this transmission machine – speaks from God, to us, giving us over the Ten Commandments. His light is shining because of the Divine revelation that is speaking through him. And then we have Aaron who is beloved by everyone. He makes peace among people, the most interpersonal. When he dies, the whole country, the whole nation is just devastated. Everyone loves Aaron.

If I had to choose, who was going to be the political leader and who is going to be the High Priest, shouldn't Moses be the High Priest? And Aaron be the political leader? Isn't that just an obvious solution there? I mean Aaron is the interpersonal guy. Moses is the holy man on the mountain. Moses should have been the High Priest and Aaron should have been the guy that's leading the nation. Why did those two jobs get switched upside down? To me, that's a really important question that we need to sort of pause, acknowledge that question – it's pretty strong, and then I want to go to the next level.

So, first, let's talk about this. First, let's like tackle that question. Aaron loved peace, he pursued peace, he wanted everyone to be in peace. And I've never met a person in my life that reminds me so much of the High Priest, Aaron, like my father. My father loves peace. I've never seen my father fight with my mother. I'm now 43 years old. I've never seen them fight. Because it's impossible to fight with my dad. It is impossible. I remember when Tehila and I first got married, so I have a pretty big personality. Tehila, she's a big personality, and we were like fireworks in the beginning. She would fight with me all of the time. And I didn't know what to do with that. I never saw my parents fight. And all of a sudden, Tehila and I are fighting all of the time. She wants it this way, I want it this way. It's our first year of marriage and we don't know what to do. I didn't even know that I was married to a lawyer, I didn't know that I would go 20 years and never win an argument. I thought that I was going to win the argument, but that never happened. And so we're battling it out in our first year of marriage. Who's going to wash the dishes? Who's this? Everything, everything was an explosion. And I had never seen my parents fight. I was like, "What are we going to do?"

So we went to my parents and I was like, "Abba, look what she's doing! Look at what the blah, blah, blah, whatever she did!" And my father would be like, "You're right." And then Tehila

would say, "Come look, your son is doing this, and this, and this." And then my father would be like, "You're right." And then I'd be like, "But Abba, we can't both be right." And he's like, "You're right." And I remember, "Alright." And just watching my father and just his presence of just being so loving and never wanting to fight, sort of like solved the issue. Like, why are we so demanding ... you're right, you're right. Just like so loving and so good and so loving peace. And on a personal level, you have to have compassion. That's the first step in the soul map. That's the foundation of a believer in the world. It's to be filled with love. And that's true between a person and their fellow, that's true between a husband and wife, parents and their children.

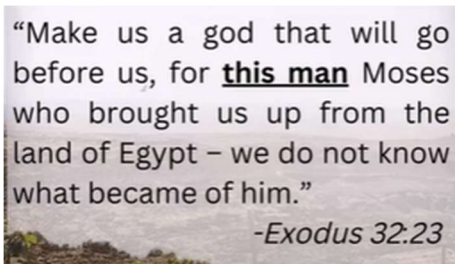
And the Temple that served all of Israel, is ultimately the meeting place of man and God. And that man and God relationship is 100% personal. And that 100% needs to be based on compassion and love and peace and understanding. And so, Aaron, that's where he lived. He lived in compromise, he lived in peace, he lived in love and understanding. But leadership of a nation...the Torah is showing us, hey. Look what happens for one moment when Moses is gone and Aaron becomes the political leader. Someone that's just a man of peace, he loves peace and he pursues peace, and he wants everyone to live in peace. That on a national level is a disaster. That's not the right fit. It's not correct, to only lead with compassion. Moses comes down as the leader and he breaks the tablets in front of all of Israel. And so many people ask, "Why did he break the tablets? I mean he could have just left them up at the Mount Sinai. He's like carrying these huge tablets all the way down the mountain. He could have just left them up there with God. Why did he bring them down and then break them down there?"

And that was the whole point. He wanted Israel to see, look at what we had here. We had a contract, crash! That's what a national leader needs to be. He needs to lead with truth. He needs to lead, not just with love and compassion. I remember hearing Ben Shapiro one time say, "In my family, I'm a communist. All of my children will be equal, each person according to their talents. Each person according to their needs. One hundred percent compassion. That's how I am with my family." But that doesn't translate to the nation, meaning that's individual leadership, interpersonal relationships. But national leadership is not the same as priestly, godly leadership.

And so we need a leader that can take the heat, we need a leader that can stand up against the pressure. And I'm looking at the political leaders in Israel right now and man. They are taking the heat. America is pressuring them to stop this legal reform, demonstrations, the police are rebelling, all of these things are happening. And someone that just wants peace, that just wants to make shalom. Ok, we won't pass the reform, let's all just live in peace. But right now, the Torah is teaching us this ancient wisdom. To lead the nation, you have to do what's right, you have to do what's just, you have to do what's moral, and you need to stand strong. And if you need to break the tablets, break the tablets.

And so, it was interesting to see like this one moment where Aaron sort of took the political leadership of the nation, it turned into a disaster. And so God knew exactly what He was doing. Although Moses with his shining face was a very spiritual man, the right person to lead spiritually was Aaron. Because with our children, in dealing with godly issues, 100% unconditional love, 100% compassion, 100% understanding. That's the way to lead someone into faith. That's the way to lead someone into love. On a national level, leadership needs to be like Moses. So that was question number one and lesson number one.

Now we're on to the second one. Why on earth did Israel build a golden calf? It's a weird thing to build, to build a baby cow? Like what's up with that? Of all the things that they could have built, they decided to build something that is really bizarre. And so I want to give a little bit of an explanation that I think is really a deep secret that's unfolded. But you really need to go into the prophets of Israel to understand it. We're told that at the splitting of the sea, something happened. And it was a revelation. The sea didn't just split, but also the heavens split. And the people, the simplest maidservant, had the revelation of Ezekiel. And what happened at the splitting of the sea, sort of the revelation at Sinai, it was like, "Whoa, we've actually experienced the revelation of God." And then Moses left. And then look what happens here. Exodus chapter 32, verse 23. Aaron is telling the story. So the people came up to us and they say:



"Make us a god that will go before us, for this man Moses who brought us up from the land of Egypt - we do not know what became of him."
-Exodus 32.23

And it's like, huh, this man, Moses, that's what it says in Hebrew, this ish Moshe. Well, if the man isn't there, Aaron, you're a new man. You're his brother. You're like meant to be the High Priest. You make the leadership now. That seems to have been, like that would have been the natural progression there. Why did they make a golden calf? Meaning the man Moses is gone, all right.

We need a new man to lead us. Aaron, you're his brother, you're his older brother. Alright, you're the new leader. No. The man Moses is gone. I'm going to make a golden image of a cow.

And so, what is going on there? And it seems like Israel wanted something, some kind of shrine, something they could wrap their mind around, like what Ari was saying. Something that they could hold on to. And it's almost like man, Moses was coming down with these tablets. That would have been something really nice that Israel really could have held onto. Like, "Ah, we got this thing from God. We have these Ten Commandments here written by the finger of God. We can really hold onto that." It's like their consciousness couldn't wrap their mind around this ineffable, invisible God. Like they wanted something they could hold on to.

But, so I don't know, something here is like the first decision, the nation needed to make when they were left without leadership, they started to panic. And it's like the state of mind that you

do when you panic, it's like...let's say if I have a decision to make. I need to go right or I need to go left. Or I'm under fire in the military, or I need to make a big life choice now. If I panic, you can almost be sure that my choice is not going to be very good. But if I'm cool, I'm calm, I'm collected, I'm confident, I'm filled with faith, I'm filled with optimism, I'm filled with hope, and then I make a decision. That decision is going to be a totally different level decision than one that's made out of panic and fear and fright and all the disaster that unfolded as Israel is panicking. And so the state of mind we hold is really like the deciding factor of everything. It will define the quality of every decision that you make.

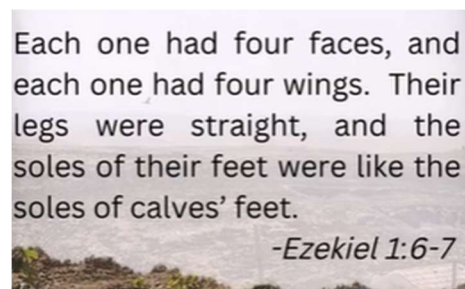
And that's why Chazal say something really. They say in Masefet Brachot, in the Tractate Brachot, on page 33, Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except the fear of heaven, or except our ability to see heaven. So something here is going on. In some ways, the law was given, but the heart of the message was missed. Then the Torah is trying to do two things. One, the law, the Torah itself is trying to mold us into the person we were created to be. And the second thing, it's trying to create a mindset. It's creating a state of mind, a perspective, a prism through which we see the world. The law needed to be broken in some ways. Because the Torah wasn't about the law. It was given to us to help us live in a relationship with God.

And maybe that's why the nation of Israel wasn't punished. The nation of Israel, I mean, it was corrected, but they were still able to go into Israel. It wasn't like the ultimate sin. The ultimate sin was the sin of the spies. It seems as though like God was relatively merciful with this golden calf issue. It wasn't really considered their worst sin because ultimately, they were trying to reach God. They just wanted an intermediary. They were trying to reach the essence. They wanted to go to the heart of it because they were left without the end of the revelation. All they had was a law. Like, I don't want a law, I want God. I want a real relationship. And Moses represented that essence. That Moses represented the Essence, if they saw Moses then they saw godliness. They saw a radiant face, they saw total humility. What is humility? Humility...Moses isn't even there. Only God was shining through. That's what they wanted. They wanted that connection to God, not just to the mishpatim, not just to the laws and the Commandments.

And so, in some ways, every spiritual leader needs to strive to be like that. A living example not of the Commandments, but what the mitzvot are designed to create out of man. It's like I've met some people in life that just encountering them, you're just struck in awe. I mean there's rabbis that I've met, you meet them and just like, whoa. Greatness has walked into the room. There's like a holy man here. There was a man here that was over Shabbat, over at the Farm. Lavi and Akiva, one is 19 and one is 16. They couldn't stop saying the words, "What a hero, what a hero." They were on repeat throughout the Shabbat meal. "I can't believe it, what a hero, that man, what a hero." They just kept on saying, "What a hero, what a hero."

In his position in the army, if you're familiar with the television show, Fauda. So if you were to see, or people were to see like the actors that play the role in Fauda, he's like...oh my gosh, can I have your autograph? We actually met the person that lives that role. Who dresses up as the enemy, goes deep behind enemy lines to find and pinpoint the exact terrorist that's on his way to kill innocent people and neutralize the terrorists. And he's married and he has two little children and he puts his life on the line every single day to protect God's people and to protect the Land of Israel and he is just a living hero and no one knows his name. He doesn't get the autographs. He's just a living hero. And you meet someone like that that's so holy and so dedicated and so selfless and you just recognize greatness is in the room.

And so what is this golden calf about? They were like trying to get to something that they felt a lacking. But why a calf? And so like I told you, the splitting of the sea happened. They didn't just see the sea split, but the Midrash said the heavens split as well. And every single Israelite experienced the revelation that Ezekiel had. And if you know the revelation of Ezekiel, look at what Ezekiel chapter 1, verses 6 and 7 say. This is a picture, an image of the Divine Glory itself:



So Ezekiel is looking up at heaven and so are the Israelites at the sea. And what do they see as they look up? They see the feet of this image of God and the angels that are surrounding have feet of calves. And they say that was the closest revelation they had to God, when they saw the calves feet. And now, they don't want the law, they don't want anything. They need a Moses, they don't have

Moses. That was the closest thing they had to the essence of the revelation.

So the golden calf was a lower vision of the higher vision they experienced of a heavenly revelation. They don't just want the law, they wanted the law-Giver. Egypt had their laws, there was a law of death and burial, there were things that you could eat in Egypt, there were things you couldn't eat in Egypt. Israel didn't want a religion. They wanted a relationship with God. And they felt like without Moses how were they going to connect? The golden calf wasn't a rebellion against God. It was a desperate attempt to reach out to God and connect with God. They just broke the rules. That's not the way God wants us to relate with Him. He doesn't want us to relate with Him through an intermediary at all.

And that's really a way to understand the golden calf. Judging Israel with the benefit of the doubt, that they weren't there worshiping idols, but they were there really seeking after God. And you can actually see what happens because you know it's not all pretty, it never is. But there were people that wanted something deeper. Look at what happens here in Exodus chapter 32, verses 26. Moses comes down and he says:

Moses stood at the gateway of the camp and said, "Whoever is for Hashem, join me." And all the Levites gathered around him.... About three thousand men of the people fell on that day.

-Exodus 32:26

They went out and they attacked that people that were out after, like idolatry of the golden calf. But that's only 3,000 people. Meaning most of the nation that participated in it, they weren't really a part of it. There were a small group of people that were actually really doing the wrong thing. They were really sort of...the evil inside the nation that were steering Israel off the path of righteousness.

But as soon as Moses said, "Mi la'HaShem ali," most of the people were like dumbfounded. They're like, "What? Moses is alive? What's happening? What's going on here?" Three thousand people, they kept on worshiping the golden calf. But most of the nation weren't a part of that group. They were just kind of like deceived and went along because they were panicking. And so, most of Israel were unengaged. And so look at what happens here in Exodus chapter 32, verse 7. Because God tells Moses something pretty unique:

Hashem spoke to Moses, "Go, descend, for **your people** that **you brought** up from Egypt has become corrupt."

-Exodus 32:7

And immediately the sages of Israel are like, "Wait a minute, God. Why are you calling them, Moses your people, that you brought up? God, You! They're Your people aren't they? You brought them out of Egypt, not Moses. Why are you saying, 'Your people Moses that you brought up, Moses?'" God is speaking to Moses and calling them his people and not God's people.

And so the Midrash says Moses, you know what's happening here. There were mixed multitudes of the nations and they just joined Israel. And you didn't ask me about those people. You just accepted them into the nation and now look. Among those mixed multitudes, there's 3,000 of them that are really evil. And they are steering Israel in the wrong direction, and now there's this group of erev rav. There's a group of people that have attached themselves to Israel that were seemingly wanting to join Israel, but amongst that mixed multitude, some were righteous and some were absolutely not. And look. They're your people because you brought them into the nation.

And so now let's unpack that story a little bit, what that speaks to us. Psychologically the erev rav, the foreign influences in our lives, the culture around us that pulls us in the wrong direction. You know, because we have many spirits within us, many ideas, impulses, desires. It's the only way I know how to call it. Many spirits neshamot, nefesh. There's a lot of forces inside man. And the ones that are pulling us into the darkness, the erev rav inside us, we gotta burn those off like sacrifices to God. Because the Torah was given for two purposes. The first purpose was to mold us into the person we were created to be. And the second was to create a mindset that in hard times, we have a state of mind, a perspective, a prism, that's the only thing

that we have. And the Torah strengthens that within us, to give us the ability to see heaven in our lives, to see God's hands in our life.

And what happens when we have number one and number two, then you're inviting God into your life. You actually become holy. The word holy means, literally, something that has invited God's Presence into it. It is a godly thing then. And when the Torah molds us into who we were created to be and our soul starts to really manifest and our mind starts to become strong because we have the ability to perceive God in our life, we become holy. We invite God to walk with us, and He walks with us no matter where we go. And that's really the essence of the story of the golden calf. It's like God says, "I am the Lord your God. Do not have any graven images before Me." And then right after the Ten Commandments, the Israelites make a graven image and start worshipping the idol. It's like, "What? That is insane. What is going on here?"

But that story isn't just history. That was a blueprint for all generations to know. God's promise is no matter what, you can make the most egregious mistake. God's promise is to always accept you. If you're willing to let the parts of you that are making you fall, that are making you weak, that are dragging you down, those parts of you, they have to die. Those parts have to go away, so you can be born again and a new person. Like a new generation in Israel can enter into the Promised Land. The sin of the golden calf is the ultimate teaching. Failure is a par for the course. You are going to fail. You're going to say, "I am going to do this perfect thing." God says, "Don't worship idols." Immediately you're going to worship idols. It's like, "I'm just such a loser, I'm just a failure, God must just have rejected me from the get-go."

And it's like, nope, nope. It's not like, "Well, I hope you succeed and don't fail." It's like get ready. Because on your way to success, you will fail. There will be golden calves that you will worship in your life, and in that failure, God is with you. It's like in strength training. When you're lifting weights to get stronger. You're really only making progress and building muscle properly when you push yourself to failure. When it's like....ahh...I can't. But like your muscles just failed. Ah, you failed, now you know you're really now gaining strength. Now you're really growing. Only when you're failing do you know that you're on your way to success.

And then the most beautiful part of the story. And that's I think, the right way to see this story. It's an eternal message for all generations. The story is not just an account of Jewish history. God looked into the Torah and created the world. So it's the blueprint of reality. God put the snake in the Garden of Eden. God allowed the nation to feel like Moses was tarrying on his way. This whole thing in some ways was all a part of the Divine plan. The failure was built into the system to begin with. And at that time of Israel's failure, of really the most egregious failure. It's like God says, "Don't make an idol," and then immediately they make an idol while Moses is still not even coming down from the mountain? And it's like, yes!

And then look at the conversation that happens between Moses and God. It's the most beautiful conversation. After the sin of the golden calf. God tells Moses, "Listen, tell the nation of Israel I'm going to send them into the Land. But I'm not going to go with them. I'm going to send an angel before them. I can't go in with them, Myself." And it seems like the betrayal of the golden calf had a real consequence, a real effect on the relationship between God and Israel. And it's like, no. God will keep His promise to bring them into the Land, but He won't walk with them anymore. He won't be among them. He'll send His angel before them.

And the nation is so devastated. And Moses say, "If you don't walk with us, what was all this for? All we want God is for You to walk with us. That You should walk among us, with us." And then Moses finds favor in God's eyes. And God says, "Ok, I'll walk with you on your way to the Land of Israel." And what happens there is a path is forged by Moses and the nation of Israel for all of eternity. That no matter what, we can make the biggest mistakes, God's promise to always walk with us, to guide us on our way that's the real Covenant of the Torah, that's the Covenant of Shabbat.

It wasn't about the tablets or the law. The tablets can be broken. Israel can rebel against the law. But as long as we continue on our path to Israel, as long as we continue to seek God's Presence in our life, as long as we're working toward experiencing God in our life, no mistake, no failure can come between us. He will always walk with us. And that's why Shabbat is so key. As long...the whole week can be a total disaster. And then in comes this last day. L'brit olam. A covenant for all times. As long as we are able to rest on that day and realign ourselves and say, "Man that last week...but now I'm back. I'm back in God's Presence."

And so, may we all be blessed to know that God's hand is stretched out always. He's guiding us on our journey. No matter the mistakes or the failures, we are always in His grip. And Shabbat is always open to us. And so, dear Fellowship, may you be blessed from Zion, knowing that HaShem is walking with all of us.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

Shalom my friends.