

Session 222

Vayikra – Preparing for Passover & Preparation for Redemption

6 April 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sS7ubdGKaL4>

Jeremy

Shalom everybody, welcome to the Land of Israel Fellowship! Can you hear me? Is everything all right? Oh, thank you very much, I love that. I have been scrolling through all of the faces and reading all of the chats during the slide show, which by the way is some of the most meaningful media you can find in Israel. And seeing you all, I mean, I don't say this lightly, but it's like a highlight in my life every time we come together. And I start seeing Fellowship members from literally all over the world. It's a lifeline to me. And I love seeing your beautiful faces, I love seeing your familiar names.

And there is something happening in Israel and it's not just that there's Passover that's in the air. I want to tell you about this event that I went to on Friday that has literally changed my life. My dear friend and brother, Joshua Waller from HaYovel and the Israel Guys podcast that Ari and I do once a week, just had a baby boy. And I've known Josh for so many years...I knew Josh before he was even married. This was his first boy after four girls. And the brit milah, the brit was on Friday. And even though it was a Friday afternoon, there was so much to do for Shabbat, Tehila gave me the green light and I picked up my close friend, Yishai Fleisher, also here from Judea, and we drove more than an hour and a half to Samaria, to Har Bracha for the brit.

And it was the first brit circumcision for the nations that I have ever been to. And I know that many people perform britot and they circumcise their children, but this one had one of the most famous mohels, one of the most famous circumcizors in all of Israel. And there were rabbis that were overseeing the ceremony, there were special blessings that were made, specifically for the nations who wanted to perform a brit as close to the Jewish tradition as possible. It was a brit and a way to enter into the covenant of Abraham, honoring Israel, honoring the Jewish people, and serving the God of Israel. It was just marvelous.

And you know it's almost Passover, the holiday of redemption, and I don't think that there is anything more meaningful that I could have done that Friday. It was holy, and it was righteous, and this verse from the very beginning of the Exodus story came to mind, Exodus, chapter 3, verse 5:

He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your **shoes** off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground."

-Exodus 3:5

Shoe – Na'al - נעל

Lock – Na'al - נעל

That's Moses right at the burning bush as he's about to receive his mission to liberate the people of Israel from Egypt. And in Hebrew it says...Na'al is shoe or sandal. But it also means lock. And as they take off your lock, we're entering into a holy time now. And so, we have to take off our shoes, we have to take off the locks. We need to unlock our

preconceived notions and allow for a new transition.

And on Friday, I felt like we had taken a step toward redemption. And I know that Ari ended up hosting Shabbat on Har Bracha with a group that had come to Israel with HaYovel and I'm sure that that felt like a step toward redemption as well. But I really want to hear more about that. But with redemption in the air, and these feelings of Passover that are just sweeping the country. You can't look at any supermarket, things are all moving, everyone is getting their house ready. The spring is in the air, the weather is different, Passover is everywhere and freedom must be sensed.

And with that redemption that is in the air, I would love to start this Fellowship with a prayer, with all of our members from all over the world, for a time that we can come together with one heart, with one prayer, from one Land, from one God, what an awesome thing we're doing.

HaShem, God of Israel, the One who brought us out of Egypt from the house of slavery, the One who liberates and saves us every day, this week is a big week. We've all gathered here to prepare for Your holiday, Pesach. Help us clean our hearts as we clean our homes. We come here every Sunday to start off our week with You in our minds, in Your Torah, in our aim. Guide us and shine Your light into our lives. Bless everyone in this Fellowship that are here right now. Bless them, bless their family, bless their loved ones. Every Seder we remember Jerusalem and act to be there. Thank You for choosing us to be the generation that is witnessing Jerusalem being rebuilt. And may our Fellowship play our part and participate in preparing the way, a new way in the world for a House of Prayer for all Nations. Amen.

And so with that, I know that Ari is not feeling totally great. I think that just all of the chaos of Passover and the army. But I asked him if he could please just come and give us a little bit of a Passover bracha, a little Torah, and so I would love to invite Ari to kick off the Fellowship. And then I have a special surprise.

Ari

Shalom Jeremy, yes thank you so much. Good to see everybody. I'm glad you brought up Joshua Waller's little son, his little boy. His name is Ezra Thomas is his name. It's an Ashkenazic custom that we don't name our children after our parents if they're alive, only once they pass away. And

so, he named his son after his father, the name that he himself carries. So clearly I've learned, that Joshua Waller is not only a righteous of the nations, but he's a Sephardic righteous of the nations. No, the truth is, I'm happy you brought it up Jeremy, because I kept on trying to think of how to bring it up and how to talk about it, but I couldn't. I didn't know how to even broach it, I didn't know how to talk about it because it was so beyond. I felt like me and you and Yishai and the different rabbis that were there were all looking at each other like...there was a whole Jew thing going on. We're looking at each other like, "What is happening right now? What is going on that there's these righteous of the nations, they're circumcising their children in the hills of Samaria, with the providence and the blessing, and the guidance of the greatest sages of our generation."

This isn't like Reformed Jewry just sweeping things over and making things up. There is an actual redemption that's happening that I myself can't even wrap my mind around to understand, to know even how to present it. I was trying to reach out to Josh because I was looking at how is there no video team here? How is this not being captured? So I grabbed my phone and I took some pictures and I took some video, but I don't want to share it without getting a blessing and permission. So perhaps if I get his permission when this is aired later, when we share this with the Fellowship members on a video level with Tabitha's brilliance and ability to insert video here, she can maybe put that in there and you will be able to see that later if Joshua allows, which I'm sure he will, I hope he will, I don't know...I don't know anything!

Ok, but I know that we're going into the times of redemption. I know we're going into the times of redemption and I don't fully grasp what that is either because you know Pesach is not only a celebration of freedom. It is the birth of am Yisrael, the birth of the nation of Israel. We talk about this a lot, a nation brought forth not just from slavery, but into covenant, into destiny, and ultimately into eretz Yisrael, into the Land of Israel. These things that we're seeing now, I know for sure, while I don't understand them fully, I know only in the Land of Israel, in the hills of Judea and Samaria, could these incredible redemptive leaps forth be happening.

You know, Rabbi Kook teaches that true freedom, as we discussed before, true charut, which is best not even defined as freedom, but as liberty, is not merely release from bondage, but the ability to complete our Divine purpose. For am Yisrael, for the nation of Israel, that purpose is inseparable from the Land promised to us. The exodus is not complete at the shores of the Red Sea, it points forward, always, to Mt. Sinai, and from there to eretz Yisrael, to the Land of Israel. Only in the Land of Israel can we complete our mission and can the nations therefore, complete their missions, can all of humanity achieve its mission. Only in the Land of Israel.

Chazal, the sages of Israel say, "There's no one who is actually a child of freedom, a child of liberty, other than someone who engages, who is immersed in Torah." But I think a question I was having

is, “What kind of Torah?” Because the truth is, that the most complete and comprehensive Torah, the Torah that will bring us to the place of redemption, is the Torah that arises from the soil of our homeland. A Torah that is not just abstract and exilic. This is not to, God forbid, denigrate the Torah that we have learned in the exile. It’s kept us alive, it’s fanned the ember of fire that’s been burning in our souls and in our hearts. But when we return to the Land, those little flames, those little embers, burst forth into fire. Right? It’s a Torah that is not personal, but is national, it’s universal, it’s grounded, it’s redemptive. On Pesach we begin to tell the story of that Torah. A Torah of a people that walks with God in history and in a Land with a mission.

You know nowhere in the entirety of the Haggadah do we find the name of Moshe Rabbeinu, of Moses. No where do we see the name of the earthly star of the show. And I believe that part of the reason at least, is it’s not to diminish his greatness, but to emphasis that our redemption from Egypt was not about individual leaders. It’s not about individuals, it was and is about the collective destiny of the nation of Israel and of all of mankind. And that destiny finds full expression only in the Land of Israel, the only place where we can live out the fullness of our Torah in its national, agricultural, spiritual and political dimensions.

This past week at the Farm, I mean it was just a week of so many things that we had a spiritual retreat led here by Rabbi Dov Zinger, one of the most prestigious rabbis in the hills of Judea. I’m going to try to explain it, I’m going to fail, but I should at least try. The Jews from throughout the Land and throughout the world, converged here in these mountains. There was deep meditation, I don’t even really like using the word meditation because that has so much baggage and so many people associate it with so many different things with what that means. But there was for lack of a better word, deep meditation, communion, discussion with the Lord. There were hours of personal connection and reaching out to HaShem. The cultivating and refining and elevating the lost art of hitbodadut, of breaking through the barriers, of breaking through the barriers and pouring our hearts out to HaShem in the most real way possible.

Now being that I’m in the army and I’m spending most of my time, definitely during then I was out patrolling and doing things, I wasn’t able to be a full fledged participant. And I also don’t think I was of the tier where I would have been amongst peers. I would have been looking upwards constantly, which is a great place to be. But I was able to dart in and out and to witness what was happening. And if no one told me what I was seeing, I would have said that I was observing an elite training of aspiring prophets. That I was witnessing a school of prophets. And the truth is, that whether or not they even realized it, that’s what it was.

We learn that when the Sea parted, the prophetic revelation was so great that a maid servant at the sea saw what Yechezkel ben Buzi, did not see. And as we know, the first redemption, the

redemption from Egypt, is the archetype for all true redemptions, on a personal level, on a national level, particularly the final one. And as the prophet Joel says in chapter 3, and it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out My spirit on all flesh. And your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams. Your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days, I will pour out My Spirit.

That is what the prophet Yechezkel tells us. That in the days of redemption, the days we're in now, God, Himself, He says right in the book of Yechezkel, chapter 36, "I will give you a new heart, I will put a new Spirit within you, and I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes."

Passover is the holiday of emunah, of trusting HaShem, that even things we don't understand, that we don't get, the path ahead is uncertain. We're in uncertain times. We're not supposed to fully understand what's happening. It's almost like it would ruin the surprise. It would ruin the redemption. You know just as our ancestors followed HaShem into the desert, today we're called to deepen our emunah in this modern phase of redemption. Even as we face threats and pain, we're living in the times of the beginning of the sprouting of our redemption. This is not a metaphor, it's a fact unfolding before our eyes, in our fields, in our soldiers, in our hearts, in our building.

So bizrat HaShem, please God, let us make this Passover not just one of remembrance, but of renewal, of redemption. Let us tell our children, not only that HaShem took us out of Egypt, but that He brought us home, and that we're here now and we're responsible to continue that journey with faith and with joy and with courage to the impending redemption ahead. May this be a happy and a kosher holiday. A kosher Passover, may this Passover bring us all closer to the true redemption, rooted in the holy soil of the Land of Israel. Thank you, my friends, it's so good to see you, stay in touch, be connected. Back to you, Jeremy.

Jeremy

Thank you so much, Ari, that was absolutely beautiful. And the fact that redemption is near, I'm starting to feel it. Usually Ari is the one that's blowing the shofar, I'm feeling it so powerfully now that we are literally entering into a transitional time. It's a fact, it's real, it can be sensed in Israel, and now I have a special treat for you. It was unexpected because Tehila just got back from court in Jerusalem. I didn't think she was going to make it on time. But she Whatsapped me while this was all going on. And she wants to share a beautiful Torah to help us all prepare for Passover. So if that's not a Passover treat, I don't know what is. So with that, I would love to introduce you to our scholar and our wonderful woman leader, Tehila.

Tehila

Hi everybody, I'm so happy to see you. Thanks Ari, and thanks Jeremy, those are beautiful ideas. Ok, I'm sure the most interesting idea and it really touches on something that we're always talking about, about the special meaning of time and how about every time has its own quality. And I heard this great metaphor. The holidays are like charges. Like imagine that you have your phone that you need to charge and your computer runs out of battery, and some people have electric cars that they need to charge up. It's like all of this stuff in your life periodically needs to be charged. And just like in our physical world we have things that just kind of go ooh and then they need to be charged. And suddenly they start working properly again, we have different parts in our souls that each one can be a little bit deflated and certain aspects in our souls, each aspect in our souls has a time, a holiday where its able to get charged up and then it's reinvigorated. And so, it's like try to understand the festivals to understand which part of us is being recharged.

Like Sukkot is called the time of our happiness. Am I having enough joy? Like where is the joy in my life? Am I getting that charged up for the rest of the year? And revelation...am I connecting to the Torah enough? We have Shavuot. So, I want to kind of think, what is also charging for us in our spirit, what is it filling up for us that needs to give us that kind of spiritual energy for the rest of the year?

So I was thinking a little bit about the name of this holiday, Pesach. You know, Pesach actually has a bunch of names that appear in the Bible, and in our traditions. We have the holiday of Matzah. That sounds pretty snazzy, like that sums it up, we eat a lot of matzah. We have Chag Aviv, the holiday of the spring, because like everything out of nature is becoming new and we're becoming new, that would be like a pretty snazzy name. And then we have Zman Charuteinu, the time of our freedom, that would have been on my Bingo card as the winner. Because like, yeah, that's the main idea, right?

And yet, in the collective spirit, we all just call it Pesach. We all just call it the Passover. Yes, it has all these names, but we don't really use those names. Most beloved kind of like flows off the tip of our tongue name for this holiday is Pesach. Why? Why was that chosen by like the spirit of people? Because when you think about it, it's referencing, not to minimize that moment of the first-borns being killed. It's not a small moment, but it's also not the main idea of the holiday. So why is that kind of eternalized in our collective memory as the main idea of the holiday? What is Pesach trying to teach us?

So, the kind of traditional understanding, the intuitive understanding is that Pesach means to "pass over." Which is why in English it would be called Passover because the English is just translating the popular understanding of the Hebrew word of Pesach. But that's not actually necessarily what

it means. When you think about it, this kind of death came over Egypt and the idea of this name is that God passed over the houses of the Jews. Why is that so exciting? All of the plagues God skipped over the Israelites. Like we didn't have blood and we didn't have frogs bothering us. It seemed relatively obvious and expected that we're not going to die in the plague that's coming to save us. Why would we die in the plague that's coming to save us? We haven't even done anything wrong. Why is it so important to think that to commemorate God skipping over our houses?

So maybe if it seems really strange, it actually is really strange. And we have to go back and really think, "What does the word Pesach really mean?" And is Passover actually the right translation? So there are two main usages of the word Pesach in the Bible. To be a pi'sach means to be a cripple. Now think about what a cripple is. Like now we have prosthetics. And somebody who is, God forbid, doesn't have the use of one or both of their legs can have a wheelchair or crutches. But imagine in Biblical times. What did it mean to be pi'sach? What did it mean to be crippled? Like in Jeremiah 30 when he says that the pregnant women and the pischim, the cripples, are going to come back to the Land of Israel, what does it mean? Why is it so surprising that cripples are going to come back to Israel? Because a cripple can't really move. He just sort of stays in place. Unless somebody moves him, he didn't have apparatus to move around. A cripple wasn't hopping anywhere. He wasn't getting over things, he was like kind of stuck in his place.

And, when Elijah, in Mt. Carmel, is rebuking the nation for worshiping the Ba'al, what does he say? He says in 1 Kings, chapter 18, I will read it to you guys – He says, "Elijah drew near the people and he says, "Until where are you hopping between two ideas?" But is that really the right translation? Because people were not hoping between two ideas, they were dwelling on two ideas. Just like the cripple dwells in one place, the people were dwelling both in the worship of God and the worship of the Ba'al. They weren't skipping over them. They were being present in these two religious ideas.

So if you look at those two words in the Bible, they do not necessarily give the connotation of an absence of being gone from something, but actually the connotation of being really, really present. Really like being somewhere. So, if you actually look at the meaning of the word Pesach in its other sort of references in the Bible, the simplest meaning of Pesach is when HaShem says, "I was pesach on the houses of Israel." We're so used to reading that as, "I passed over the houses of Israel." But actually that's not the obvious Hebrew meaning. It's that "I dwelled, My Presence dwelled in the houses of Israel."

Well now that's really a whole different way of looking at things. Because there are two kinds of ways of looking at things. When darkness, death, war, destruction are coming in the world, some

people say, "Why does God do all these bad things to me," right? "He should have skipped over me." Another way of looking at it is this plague came into the world. Where was HaShem? HaShem brought His Presence through the paschal offering. He brought His Presence into the houses of all of the god-fearing Israelites. If you look at it that way, it's a whole different ball game. Why is our spirit so attached, as a nation, as a collective, to this name Passover, which sounds like God skipped over us, which is like, "Thanks for not killing us, but it doesn't sound that meaningful."

Why would we be so attached to this name? Because maybe it means something so profound that when all of this destruction was whirling around Egypt, where were we safe? We were safe by turning our homes into a sacred space that would invite the Presence of God to be close to us. And when the Presence of God is close to you, that is your protection. The question is not like, "How do I get God to not bring all the bad stuff on me?" But like, "How do I plug myself in to a connection, a connection with HaShem to bring His Presence into my home so that I can be in this sort of cocoon of this shelter away from all of this destruction." Now we live now in a world where, "Is there going to be war with Iran, and is there going to be war here? Nuclear war? Destruction? So what do I do?"

Pesach is teaching us you invite HaShem into your home. And like Ari and Jeremy were talking about how they feel the redemption is so near, and I want to be, "I want to be with you guys, but I'm so busy scrubbing my house, I don't feel like any redemption is near. I feel like I just have to clean another pantry." But if you're doing it because HaShem skipped over the Jewish houses, "Ok, I'm doing it because I have to do it?" But if you are tending to your home now and preparing your home to accept and invite in the Presence of HaShem, that's like Wow! Oh my gosh. Of course I want to be tidying my house. Of course, I want to be cleaning and going shopping and buying everything. Because HaShem, Himself is coming.

So if every holiday is to plug our soul into some kind of particular aspect of godliness, a particular aspect of holiness, I would suggest that Passover, which I'm not going to call Passover anymore, I'm going to call it...Come on over, HaShem. Pesach is not just charging one aspect, it's actually connecting to the Holy One, blessed be He, Who is telling us that He will come and dwell with us when we create a space in our homes and with our families to invite Him in.

So we are charging not just one side of ourselves, but charging our entire soul which is the godly part in us which is actually able to be completely unified with HaShem on Pesach. And so, with that, I just bless all of us to create a beautiful home, beautiful space with our families, to invite HaShem in fully and to experience His Presence this Pesach. So, with that, I wish you guys a happy, kosher holiday. Bye guys.



Jeremy

All right, thank you very much, Tehila. That was absolutely beautiful. Talk about Passover, instead of skipping over the holiday, dwelling in the home. It's a totally different holiday. And that's really what we're celebrating. So also, a big announcement. Today, at 8:00 P.M., Israel time, about an hour after the Fellowship, Tehila will be hosting a pre-Passover Women of Valor session. She has even more inspiring Torah and a beautiful women's community has been building around our Fellowship. You can chat, you can ask questions, you can interact with Tehila. And I think she's bringing in a special guest to talk about preparing for Passover, and the Passover Seder from a woman's perspective. That will happen about one hour after the Fellowship. All right.

One more announcement. Over the past few months, I have developed a course that will be released right after Passover. It's called, like my book, "Waking Up. The Ancient Judean Way to Biblical Faith." It's a course that really complements the book, but it's the complete package. The book was about Hebrew prayer and waking up in the morning. This is more about waking up to the times that we're in. And if we're moving into an era that will have a Temple in Jerusalem, we need to create a path that transcends religion. We need to create a language that connects all believers in God to each other and to the God of Israel. And this course is exactly for people who are looking to live by biblical faith, the Judean way, the Hebrew way. And it's as authentic as I can make it. It was filmed mostly in front of a live audience as well in a Yeshiva in Jerusalem. And of course, it will be released to the public, and our Fellowship of course gets a special in with that course. But that new blessing of the Land of Israel Network this year that we're able to develop so much more content professionally produced. So with that, you should keep waiting. Because after Passover, a new course about biblical faith for the nations and for the Jewish people is entering into the world and that's pretty beautiful.

And so, now let's get ready to prepare for the great day ahead of us. And in order to prepare for the great day, I really want to take a bird's eye view and start from the macro of Passover. The Passover Seder is the oldest religious ritual in the Western world. Obviously the first Passover Seder happened the night of Passover and the Jewish people have been keeping it ever since. And when you think about that, without property and a land, without a police or an army or any of the technical realities of nationhood, the Jewish people kept the Torah law voluntarily in exile for 2,000 years. There is nothing else remotely like that in all of history.

And in that way, when we see ourselves as another link in the eternal chain of Israel, it's mind-blowing. That in 2025, Jews and believers, the nations, all over the world are going to be participating this most ancient ritual again this year. And in Israel specifically, the circumcision, the brit, and the Passover Seder are the two most celebrated commandments. Everyone has a Passover Seder. You may have tatoos coming up your neck and on your face and on your arms, and

you may be totally secular, but Passover Seder...every Israeli, practically does the Passover Seder. And in that way, the mitzvah is the deed with an action in the form of a prayer. And in that way, Proverbs chapter 6, verse 23 says:

The Mitzvah (commandment) is a lamp and the Torah is Light. -Proverbs 6:23 The purpose of lighting a lamp is not the act of lighting. The goal isn't to consume the oil, to burn the wick. The real purpose is to produce light. The Torah IS light. The purpose in performing the mitzvah in the meaning, in the light we create from it. And in

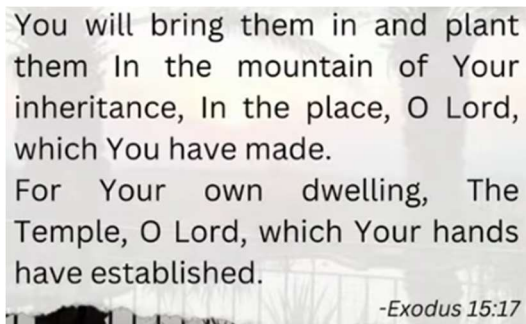
that way, the mitzvah is our prayer. And the mitzvah are formative. Our soul arose by higher deeds, by noble deeds. Our souls are illuminated by this sacred act. And so, the purpose of all of the commandments is ennoblement, to discipline, to inspire. If the law just becomes petrified, observance, mechanical, we violate and distort the very spirit.

That's why we're taking time, like we are now, like Tehila will be doing later on, because Passover is so important. You spiritually will get out of Passover the preparation that you put in. It's as if Israel comes together in this Passover Seder and it's a collective offering, our prayer to God. We may not keep all of the commandments. But this ancient command, the telling over of our story as a people to the next generation, that's my prayer. That's Israel's prayer.

And you know I keep on thinking about the time, 75 years, three generations, we celebrate Passover with Tehila's family. And we have her 92-year-old grandmother, together with my 21-year-old son, who is currently in a 10-year army program, serving the state of Israel, and my 7-year-old daughter, Chen, who looks like a miniature, cute version of Tehila. Like a mini-me of Tehila. And all of us come together at the Seder. From 92, all the way down to our littlest child.

And when you think about just 80 years ago, the Jewish people were in Auschwitz. Look at the Jewish people in Israel today. So much has happened in just three generations. Can you imagine where we're going to be in 80 years from now? The amount of processes that Israel went through in the last 80 years, it's just astounding. And we are so close to the revelation of Mashiach. We're so close to a House of Prayer for All Nations. When we finally crossed the Red Sea, we sang that one day God will build a Temple in Jerusalem. In our first moments of freedom as we're crossing the Red Sea, we sang about our final destination in Jerusalem.

And this Passover, it just feels like we've never been closer. But look in Exodus chapter 15, verse 17, from the Song of the Sea:

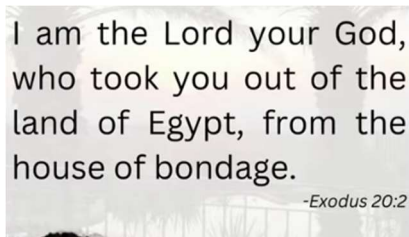


You will bring them in and plant them In the mountain of Your inheritance, In the place, O Lord, which You have made.  
For Your own dwelling, The Temple, O Lord, which Your hands have established.

-Exodus 15:17

Already in our first moment of freedom, we were already singing about the Temple. And it's enough just for people to remove their shoes, just to unlock themselves, to unlock their preconceived notions of how they should be, what they should be. And if all of us liberate ourselves, that will pave the way toward true redemption. And we talk about freedom, we talk about liberation. This is the holiday of freedom.

And so, I want to take some time and dive into why is the holiday of all holidays centered around freedom? And what does freedom mean in the Land of the Bible? And it's so important because Passover is more than just a story of liberation. It's the blueprint for what true freedom means. In our world, there's like a confusion. Freedom means endless choices, self-indulgence, do what you want, go with the flow. The exodus Passover reminds us, real freedom isn't about doing what we want. It's about becoming who we truly are. That's why the first commandment in the 10 Commandments doesn't begin with a command at all. It begins with our identity. The first commandment:



I am the Lord your God, who took you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

-Exodus 20:2

Before the law, before the rules, before the rituals, before anything, God defines the relationship. Not as Creator of the Universe, but as Redeemer, the One who broke our chains. The One who reached into our darkness and said, "You're not a slave. You're My people. You're free."

Now why does God introduce Himself as the God who took us out of the Land of Egypt, from the house of slavery? Why not introduce us as, "Hi, I'm God Who created the entire universe." Why not give us the big shebang, tell us You're the Master of all, the Creator of many universes, the cosmos. You rule. Why is it that He introduces Himself in the 10 Commandments, "I am the God Who brought you out of Egypt?"

Well, the first reason is the Creator of the Universe isn't necessarily a personal God. There's a higher power and intelligence that created the universe. And here we are now, just in our Universe. On Passover, HaShem continued His promise to Abraham. Because He personally freed one family to fulfill His promise. He's not only the God of the cosmos, but HaShem who watched and passed over or dwelled in the homes of every single freed slave.

What does it mean that He freed them? What is freedom? Our society tells us that freedom is the ability to just do anything. I'm free. To float like a leaf, directionless, pointless, answerable to no

one. But a leaf in the wind isn't free. It's at the mercy of every gust, every change, every mood. The Torah gives us a different image, not a leaf, but a tree. Rooted, nourished, reaching upward, blossoming in its season. True freedom is free to flourish into who we are. Freedom in the Torah isn't about escaping structure. It's about devotion. It's about the choice to align with something greater than the self. It's about anchoring yourself in values that transcend the immediate moment and transcend your immediate desires to rise above the ego. That's why Passover isn't just the end of slavery. It's the beginning of service.

The Israelites didn't leave Egypt to be free from Pharaoh, they were freed for something higher. To serve and love and become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Because you are not just a body looking for pleasure and living by instincts. You are a soul, longing for truth. And doing the will of God IS the ultimate freedom. Not because it limits you, because it reveals you. You don't have a soul, you are a soul. And the soul wants to be devoted, it wants to be devoted to something beyond itself. People are only happy, their soul is only at peace when there's an aim and a goal beyond yourself that you're committed to. Committed to the Torah, committed to God's will, devoting your life to the ultimate good, is your soul's deepest desire.

And if our soul is a small piece of HaShem, doing His will is the deepest will and desire of our soul. It's unlocking our soul, it's unshackling our soul. For our soul to be free, it's like revealing our soul in the world. And every soul that's revealed is a light of HaShem that's brought into the world. And the more souls that are revealed, the more of us manifest in the world, the more light that shines, and really that's the process of the Jewish return to the Land of Israel.

Since October 7<sup>th</sup> and all of the challenges of this war, it's been forced upon us. Israel had to serve something greater than ourselves, we had to leave our homes, we had to enroll in the army, we had to help the people around us. We had to become a society that was more loving, that was more unified. Israeli society has been transformed and it will never be the same. The Chamas lost as soon as they attacked Israel. That's the truth. We are more united, more loving. A recent study came out now and said 40% of secular Israelis say that they have become more religious and more connected to God since October 7<sup>th</sup>. I mean, there's been a tectonic shift spiritually within Israel.

I believe every family in Israel is going to be celebrating this Pesach. They're going to be doing a Seder in their home, kibbutzim, secular people that were on the real fringes. Everyone this year is going to be entering in to the most ancient ritual. Everything is preparing us for what's ahead. There's going to be a new Israel. It's going to be a new Jerusalem.

And with that, we have to understand, what is that new Israel? As they crossed the sea, they're singing about the Temple, they gave us the final dream. And the story of Egypt, it was never about

Pharaoh. It was never just about slavery. Egypt, Mitzryim, represents something much deeper. It's like a world view of evil that ruled the world. The mightiest empire. It was a civilization that worshipped death. The pyramids were just structures that worshipped mummies and death. It was a death cult that worshipped power and control, a place where human beings were treated as property, where pyramids were built on the backs of suffering, where life served only the throne of men. Egypt was a society of death, power and control.

And if you think about it, that's exactly like the ideology of Chamas and the Jihad today. It's spiritually the same enemy. But once that force was the mightiest empire in the world and we were slaves. Israel, is wiping the Land clean of that evil. Because we've always been called to build Israel as a counter-Egypt. Egypt built on fear, Israel must build on love. Egypt glorified death, Israel must sanctify life. Egypt used others, Israel must be a light to others and uplift others.

When you think about Exodus 23, verse 9, you realize that it says to love our neighbor one time in the Torah, but it says to love the stranger, 36 times.

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the soul of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

-Exodus 23:9

We know what it's like to be strangers in a strange land. We need to build a society that will be a blessing to the strangers that come to celebrate in our House of Prayer for all Nations. The Egyptian experience, our suffering there, wasn't just a trauma to be overcome. It was training, it was a call to become the opposite of everything that Egypt stood for.

The Slonimer Rebbe, Netivot Shalom explains that our descent into Egypt was necessary to carve compassion into the soul of Israel. We can only truly understand the pain of the other by becoming the other. Only a people who had tasted the bitterness of oppression can carry a mission of redemption for the whole world. And in that way, the exodus wasn't just about liberation, it was about transformation. And the Land of Israel wasn't just a destination, but really, it's the laboratory for building a counter-civilization, for building God's dwelling place on earth.

In Israel, we have God. Egypt might made right. Israel, righteousness is might. Egypt, the stranger was exploited. In Israel, the stranger must be loved, must be blessed. And when you learn the Torah of the Land of Israel, Torat Eretz Yisrael, it isn't just physical toil, it's sacred ground meant to grow a new kind of society, a society where justice reigns, where the weak are protected, where holiness permeates everyday life.

So every time we remember Egypt, at our Seder table, in our prayers, in our mitzvot, we're not just recalling suffering, we're reaffirming our mission to become a holy counter-Egypt, to build a

nation rooted in justice, compassion, and life. To love the stranger, not despite our pain, but because of our pain. That's the legacy of the exodus, that's the calling of am Yisrael in the Land of Israel today. And that's why every year on Passover night, on an individual level, we do more than just remember. We are commanded to experience something.

The Mishnah, Pesachim, chapter 10 says it like this:

In every generation, a person must see themselves as though they personally came out of Egypt.  
-Mishnah, Pesachim 10:5

Passover night it's not enough to just think about Passover. You have to actually see yourself as though you personally came out of Egypt right now. It's not just a reenactment. It's a spiritual exercise in our identity. Because for the Jewish people, the memory, it's not about the past, it's about becoming who we are called to become.

The Hebrew Bible doesn't have a word for history. But it tells us to remember, *zachor*, no less than 169 times. No word for history, but a lot of emphasis on memory. That's because biblical memory is not a passive recollection. It's active, consciousness. It's about carrying the meaning of the past into the mission of the present. It's taking what we have in our past and bringing it forward into the future.

You see the Torah isn't just a book of ideas. It's a book of stories. Over ¾ of the Bible are stories. Why? Because it is the unfolding of real life, messy, miraculous reality. History that God reveals His will to us. And that Israel discovers our purpose. We were the first nation to ever declare that history has meaning. That what happens in time matters, that events aren't random, but a part of a process that ultimately will bring us toward redemption.

Rav Kook teaches that Exodus is not just a one-time event. It's a cosmic pattern. Every generation must undergo its own Egypt and its own redemption. The return to the Land of Israel is not just a geo-political event. It's the next chapter in the book of Exodus. The next chapter of the book of names and new revelation of who we are. We are finally in the last generation in the Land of Israel. For so many centuries we said, "Next year in Jerusalem, next year in Jerusalem." And this year, Jerusalem is being rebuilt, Jerusalem has never been so big.

And on a personal level, everyone that's marching their way to Jerusalem, we have a path as well. I mean, you look at the map of the Middle East, and the journey from the Red Sea to Israel, it's about three days. They walked for 40 years. Those 40 years were training. Those 40 years were preparation. They spend their time wandering around the desert, and the journey was not always pretty. It's wrought with mistakes and sins and sadness and tragedy and ups and downs and war.

But they were being groomed. And in every mistake, there was a life lesson that was learned. You see a slave only knows one thing. Tomorrow is going to pretty much like today. And the next day, just like yesterday. A slave lives with a certain level of security and certainty. That's really all that a slave has.

And in some ways, the slaves were addicted to that certainty. So many of their complaints were about the food and the security that they HAD when they were in slavery. So the first thing we see is that they had no certainty at all. They have no idea where they're going today and they have no idea where they're going tomorrow. We had no idea where the food is going to come from. Every day the manna will be provided. They break away from slavery and immediately put into boot camp for faith in uncertainty. Why? Because the journey toward redemption is unknown and filled with uncertainty. That's the lesson for us now. As they continue to follow the pillar of fire in their life, they continue to grow in faith, they begin to see the manna is provided for them, every day. They walk in the light and they begin to see the light.

In particular, the next generation, born free, woke up free, liberated from Egypt were stronger in their faith, able to enter into the Land. They trained themselves to walk in God's light and follow His guidance. They trained themselves to trust that He will provide for them every day. They train themselves to live in uncertainty and know that as long as they're aligned with HaShem's mission for them in their life, they are walking in His light and they're on track. And they also learned that if you veer from the path, you'll be corrected and brought right back to where you need to go.

And so, this Passover Seder, this journey, it's preparing us just as it was preparing them. Where were they headed? They were headed to the Promised Land, to build the Temple in Jerusalem that would be a blessing to the world. Where are we? We're headed toward Jerusalem to build a Temple that will be a light to the whole world. Their journey to redemption is our journey to redemption. That's why we have to see ourselves as though we left Egypt and we're continuing that journey. That we are the fulfillment of that promise that God originally made to Avraham. We are the children of Avraham and now the nations are joining the covenant of Avraham, quite literally. As they celebrate Passover and as now we see they're starting to fulfill the commandment of brit milah, like the Jewish people. Something is happening that is taking us toward the redemption. And that is what the Passover Seder should mean for us. It's another step toward redemption, another step as we enter in to the Promised Land.

And with that, I want to give us all a blessing this Passover. That as we clean our homes, we clean our hearts. And as we gather together around our table with our family, with our loved ones, that we don't recall it as our history, but we live it as our memory. And we know that just as we enter into uncertain times now, and we see instability around the world, in our first encounter, what an

encounter with Amalek, with evil, that is a part of the redemption process. October 7<sup>th</sup> was a must to wake us up to the reality of evil. That is a part of the journey to the Promised Land.

And now, Israel is getting stronger, Israel is coming together, Israel is becoming more united. Our Fellowship is getting strong, and all of us together are preparing for Passover, and all of us, bizrat HaShem are entering into the covenant and the promises to Abraham. And all of us will soon be celebrating in a House of Prayer for all Nations. And this Fellowship is a virtual House of Prayer for all Nations.

And so, with that, I want to bless you from this place and bless you this week with the most beautiful Passover of your life. Where you feel HaShem will dwell in your home like Tehila taught us. That you prepare a Passover Seder and within the chaos of life, HaShem gives you seder, He brings order to your life and shows you the path, all the way to the Promised Land.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

Shalom my beautiful Fellowship. It is so wonderful to be together. Don't forget that in just a little bit more than an hour, Tehila will be back here for all the women, the Women of Valor, and she will take your preparation for Passover to the next level. So with that, I bless you with a beautiful new biblical year, with liberation and redemption. I will see you again after Pesach. Pesach Sameach! Shalom!