

## Session 89

Tzav – The Journey from Purim to Passover. From Redemption to Redemption

20 March 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZGTrds0kko8&t=4s>

Jeremy

Hey everybody! Shalom, welcome, welcome, welcome! It is so good to see you guys! The world that we live in...it's just like there's a constant unfolding of the miraculous. We had an amazing Purim on the farm. Absolutely a highlight in my year. And the reason why I played that song was because it kept on coming back to me. I just now recorded the song in Hebrew because I feel like it's an important message that needs to be brought to only Hebrew-speaking people as well, because the English is sort of inaccessible to them. And I just feel like we have to be able to tap into that place in us, that we can't do it all the time because it's exhausting, but to really love life with all our hearts, with all our soul and with all of our might. You know, I've written a book about Jewish prayer and one of the challenges of Jewish prayer is that King David, you know, he was just speaking from his heart as he's writing from his heart the book of Psalms. And then the Jewish prayer and the tradition is, we've taken many of his Psalms, and then we recite them every day. But sometimes you're reciting such heartfelt things, but you're just not really in line with the words that are being said, but because that's the law, the Temple has been destroyed and instead of the Temple sacrifice, our sacrifice to God is in time and we pray in the morning, we pray in the evening and we say the Shema. And you know, it's like "Hear O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is one. You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your might." And so, you can say that if you're really feeling loving to God. But you need to say it even if you're not. And every morning and every night, just over and over again. And it's a training. It's like a muscle that's almost being exercised.

And then every once in awhile a decision or an opportunity will present itself in life and you gotta make a decision. And then you need to say, alright, this is a chance to love God, to love life, to love this chance that I have now, we can just give it everything that I have. And I don't know when that day is going to come, but it feels like it's going to come pretty soon. And it's going to come pretty soon for everyone in different stages in their life. But I feel like it's going to come pretty soon for all of us all at once. And we're just going to have to dig down deep and we're going to have to find that strength at some point to be strong enough to be a support to everyone around us, to be enough light to light up the people that are around us. And it's going to take a lot of love. And you know, it's just so easy to fight, it's so easy to feel resentful, it's so easy to kind of get vengeful. That's just the natural instincts of the animal side in us. But the love inside us is more powerful. It's what's guided the world. And that's really I think what Purim reveals. And we're going to get into that in just a little bit.

But I just want to share something that's happened right now in Israel because it may be a little bit removed from the people outside of Israel, but pretty much all of Israel, the center of Israel was in an absolute gridlock today. They pretty much shut down all the major highways because Rabbi Kanievsky passed away and his funeral was today.



Now Rabbi Kanievsky, there's a nice picture of the Rabbi. I think he was the uncontested Torah scholar of the generation. Meaning, he was the highest authority in the entire world. Meaning if there was ever a Torah question about any type of Torah law and it was like, let's say, I'm asked a question. Very often, I don't know the answer, so then, I go to my Rabbi. And then if my Rabbi doesn't know the answer, he'll turn to his Rabbi. And if his Rabbi doesn't know the answer, he'll

turn to his Rabbi. And there's like 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 kind of chains of command, but pretty much like the top of the pyramid...if it ever got to a question that no one knew what to do...Rabbi Kanievsky would pretty much be the authority that everyone would accept what he says. And that's a tremendous amount of honor, that's a tremendous amount of power, that's a tremendous amount of influence and the man was a little bit out of this world.



I mean, every year, he finished, not just the Bible, not just the Codified Law in the Mishna Berura, and all of the Laws of Maimonides, all of the Rishonim of the Shulchan HaAruch, all of the Babylonian Talmud, all of the Jerusalem Talmud, all of the Midrashim, all of the mystical writings of the Zohar and the Ari...I mean it's like he learned the entire Torah, every year. It's hard to...if I finish all of the Babylonian Talmud in my

lifetime, I will be a happy man. He finished everything once a year. Like, he woke up a few hours after midnight and then he pretty much was learning Torah and praying all the time. Just like the man was an angel of a human being.

They went into his house, some of the secular reporters and at the beginning, they're already a little bit combative. And they're expecting him to be taking advantage of his religious position to kind of monetize his power that he has. And they walked into his home and they saw that he doesn't really have anything. He has a very small little kitchen that he cooks his Shabbat meals in. He has a couch, like a small house with almost no possessions. Just a man of God through and through. Now, he didn't remove himself from the world. He was married, he had children, he provided for his children, but just holy, just pure. And when he left the world, it's a trauma because...uh oh. Who's the father of the Torah now? What if we have a big question now? No

one really knows who is going to be like the final authority if anything ever happens. It's kind of like a transitional time where we're really sort of left here.

But what's amazing is that you know, there are no coincidences and definitely not in such a person's life who is the Torah authority of all of Israel right now. But he finished that cycle of learning that I said every year on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, right before Passover, every year. And then, this year was a leap year. So he finished his cycle on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Adar, right before Purim. And as he finished his last cycle, he passed away. And, do we have a picture of the funeral?



There were reports of a half a million people that came to his funeral to a million people I saw on one outlet. That's so many people, it's the largest funeral that Israel has ever had in its history by far. And I don't know what that means and I didn't have a personal relationship with Rabbi Kanievsky, I never even met him. I knew of his existence, that there was such a Rabbi in the world. But just learning about him today hearing more and more about him. I was always comforted that I knew there was such a Torah

giant in the world. But, yet it's kind of a day where this is all Israel is talking about, that's all the news is about. The whole country because there were a million people in the streets. Hundreds of thousands of people are gathering the streets to just kind of walk with him to the cemetery. Just the whole country, that's what Israel is experiencing right now. And I just wanted to make sure...I'm sure that's not broadcasted on Fox News or CNN. But kind of a Torah giant in our generation. And that's really beautiful. A Torah giant, you know.

The Torah is a living document and it's like you can study Korean history, but that's not going to make you Korean. Then you can study geometry and it's not going to make you a triangle. But there is something about the Torah that if it's studied sincerely, it really changes you. It changes you, you become a more godly person, the more light you sort of absorb, it really changes who you are. Someone just on the chat now said this is our 89<sup>th</sup> gathering together in the fellowship. I said it's really lifechanging. Because as we're learning together, we're growing together and it's like it's all in one. It's like as we learn, we grow. We become a little bit more filled with His light and that light changes our lives. And so, it's quite life-changing.

So, anyway, with that, I just wanted to start off our fellowship with this amazing opportunity because I was just watching the chats from like the eastern United States to middle America to the west coast. We have here Usack, it's 2 A.M. in Australia. He's here. Capetown from Africa, Norway, Sweden, just all over the world. It's just such an opportunity to bring the entire world

together. And unite. That's what we're here to do, is just bring the world a little bit closer together, a little bit more love, a little bit more prayers.

So, HaShem, Master of the World, thank You for this life. Thank You for today, thank You for Purim, thank You for Pesach that's coming. Thank You for the rains, thank You for my Wife, thank You for my children, thank You for the health and the strength to continue, thank You for this fellowship. We're here. The first fellowship of this kind, as an example for the world. As we grow closer to You, we grow closer to each other. And as we grow closer to each other, we're bringing everyone along with us. So teach us how to live together, teach us how to pray together, how to learn together, how to grow together. HaShem, help us grow. Help us grow upright. Bless everyone in this fellowship. Bless them, bless their families. Bless them with health and protect them. Shine Your light in their lives so they can shine Your light. And in their loved ones lives around them. All of us should come together with one heart, one people, one Land, one promise to Your capital in Jerusalem very soon. Amen.

Alright, my friends. So a lot happened over Purim and I wanted to share with you a lot of what I experience, what I learned, what was revealed to me. But first, I wanted to give you an opportunity to just look at Ari. He doesn't need to say much, but I know his camera has been off because he wants to show you how he's been living since Purim. And so, I just want to invite Ari because I've never seen anything like it so, Ari, you're on.

Ari

Shalom fellowship. Do you know how much I love this fellowship?

Jeremy

We can't see you, Ari.

Ari

I know you can't see me yet. Ok? Because I want to give a little introduction. Alright? Because I love this fellowship so much, that I have kept on my Purim costume this whole time since Purim so I can share it with you, which was not an easy thing to do, but I did it! So are you ready? Do you know why it was so difficult to do? Well, here it is!!



That's true. Yes. I shaved off half of my beard. It's a true story, it's not a special thing. And as shocking as this may be for you, it was even more so for Shaena, right? Shaena has never seen me without a beard. I've had an uninterrupted beard for well over ten years now. And let me tell you, it was a little bit vulnerable for me even

coming on like this, even though it was an intentional moment and...I got to get Jeremy's screen out of there. I can't look at his face right now. But, you know, it was shocking for her, it was shocking for Dvash, but it was even more surprising for me. Alright?

So here's the story. Most Purims, I wear the same costume. It's a long-sleeve tie-dyed shirt that I bought 20 years ago for my arm which I burned from sun exposure. Doesn't matter. It's not the most creative costume. But it's good enough for me. So I woke up on Purim morning and I put on my lame costume and I walked into the bathroom and I looked at myself in the mirror. And from out of nowhere, the thought shot into my mind. That's a long beard. That's a long beard. Maybe I should shave it off. Or even weirder, half of it off. Because I remember dorm counselors that did that when I was in college. But then I thought, "No way, I can't do that. I can't do that. There are people out there who look at me as their rabbi. And I have this rabbi beard that I also really like. I can't take this beard off. What would people think of me? What would the fellowship think of me?"

And then I thought, "Uh, oh. What will people think of me? Oh no, this beard is going to have to come off now. Because it's become its own sort of mask." It's true. I do connect with the idea of having a beard. And this will probably be the last time in my life that I ever don't have one. But at that moment, I knew in my heart that it needed to come off. Even if I didn't fully know why. Or not that it needed to come off. But if it didn't, if I didn't take it off, I would lose the valuable opportunity to grow in whatever way that taking it off would allow me to grow. And I was trying to have a lev shomea, you know a listening heart that King Solomon prayed for when he was a boy and became king. And part of that means to be able to bypass and circumvent the intellect, just for a moment, and just listen to what my heart is telling me.

And the thought in my mind was that, you know, part of the reason that we put on masks is to remember that we wear masks all the time. That to some degree, this world is a mask. And perhaps my mask this Purim will be to take off my mask. Laying it all bare. And my brain was screaming, "No! This is a bad idea. Think this over." But I knew two things. One thing was for that moment and maybe for only that moment, shaving off my beard was a true spiritual endeavor. I just know that feeling by now and it's something I can't explain. I felt like it would be a real, spiritual service of HaShem that would ultimately bring me closer to Him. Even if I didn't fully understand how or why.

And the other thing I recognized was that if I didn't do it right then, I wouldn't do it at all. There were just too many different compelling reasons NOT to do it. And I also had enough confidence in my relationship with Shaena that I knew that if I told her that I did this because this is where my heart led me that it wasn't just a crazy silliness, but it was a true service of the heart, that she would support me in that, which was super important. So I found my shaver and after years of neglect, it really, it worked. Which was like a sign. And I shaved off half of my beard. Then I thought, "Ok, let's see who thinks I'm their rabbi now!" So I walked out to

the other room and when Shaena saw me, she was speechless. And she was like dumbfounded, and confused, and disoriented and then she just burst out laughing, followed by Dvash, who burst out laughing. She didn't know what the heck was going on, but she looked at me like, "Who is this guy?"

Anyways, that was pretty much the response I got throughout the day. People were incredulous that I could do such a thing for a costume. And I trying to explain to them that I really didn't just do it for a costume, I wanted to lay myself bare and just for a moment to take off my beard and remember that I'm just Ari, I'm a guy with cheeks and a few freckles and that I can never fall into the trap of taking myself too seriously. That I did it because the moment called for it. So some people understood, some people like Jeremy weren't exactly in the head place to understand, but I think he respected it for what it was.

Anyways, one person, my friend Ryan's wife, she asked me if I was dressed as both Haman and Mordecai. Right? And she said it wasn't that my bare face looked like Haman, she just said that my bearded face looked like she imagined Mordecai's face to look. Which left my bare face to be the contrast to that, to look like Haman. Anyways, I looked in the mirror and I found myself deeply reflecting on that. That one side of my face was Haman and the other side was Mordecai and that perhaps led to one of the most meaningful moments of the entire holiday. Because as I looked at my reflection, I realized that really is what Purim is about to the deepest level. Because you remember when we learned in Bereshith, in Genesis, I remember we learned this together, that we all have Esau and Jacob within us. Well, even more so than that, we all have Mordecai and Haman within us too. And the real battle isn't just about fighting the external Haman's of this world, the external Amalek's in this world. The real battle is about defeating the Haman within us. Right? Defeating that dark voice that ambushes us with like these whispers, "No, it's a coincidence. And things are random and by chance." That Haman in our ear and in our hearts. That's what the real war is about. Right?

Because the gematria, remember the numerical value? The last three weeks in a row we've talked about it. The gematria of Amalek is 240, which is the same number as safek, which means doubt. Meaning that the real world, the real war that we have in defeating Amalek, the real war to vanquish Haman is within our own hearts. Our success first and foremost in that arena determines our success in the external battles in the physical world. And so looking at my face on Purim helped me externalize the truth that the real battle really happens here, right? In our own hearts. In defeating the Haman within ourselves to purge ourselves of that doubt and to fill our hearts with faith.

Now a normal person would have shaved the other side of their face the moment that Purim ended and just start growing a beard again, right? It's not that weird just to have a guy without a beard. Look at Jeremy, he doesn't have such a beard. But after all that, you know, I was thinking about actually King David's men in the 2<sup>nd</sup> book of Samuel, chapter 10, how many of

you thought about that? When the evil Ammonite King shaved off half of their beards to embarrass them. What did they do? They went home and they waited until it grew back. It's maybe what I should have done. But not me! I wanted to share it with all of you, which meant keeping it on over Shabbat. So I ended up going to Modi'in, one of the biggest cities in Israel to spend Shabbat with my sister. Now my sister looked at me and she looked at both sides of my face independently and she said, "Cover up the beard side." She just looked at my beardless face and she goes, "You know, beardless is not a good look for you. It's just really not a nice look. You should really keep the beard." To which I responded, "So you're just saying, my bare face is not a good look. My face is not a good look. I should go with the beard." Who would want to hear that? But anyways, siblings can say all sorts of things.

And so, then it came time to go to synagogue. And of course, the first voice in my head was that I should pray at home this Shabbat, maybe it's best not to go to one of the more prominent synagogues in the area and just sit this one out. But then I thought, "Nope, that's the whole point. If I go to synagogue now, after Purim, I can really get my money's worth with this whole beard thing. I could really get the spiritual bang for my buck." It's a little bit like the self-deprecating equivalent of Jeremy's cold plunge. Right? That's what it felt like, like ok, I'm gonna do this. And I forced myself to do it and when I arrived, I started feeling that burn. That ego burn. I was definitely getting looks. Not only from strangers, but I knew many people there. Will they think that I'm crazy? Will they stop respecting me? I felt that ego burn and there was really something cleansing about it.

I found myself thinking about the famed Novardok Yeshiva, you remember the Yeshiva Novardok, Jeremy? We learned about that in the 1800's where these students were known to do particularly humiliating, self-deprecating things like going to a bakery and asking to buy a hammer or a screwdriver, or dressing in torn rags or stuff like that. They did this in order to ensure that they didn't care too much about what other people think. And the words kept going through my head, right? It's better to be a fool in the eyes of man for your entire life than in the eyes of God for even a moment. But then I would look in the mirror and say, "You know I actually probably look like a fool in the eyes of God, too." But that's neither here nor there.

But anyways, I arrived at the synagogue, I took my seat in the back, and within a few minutes, someone approached me and brought me a mask. And while I originally thought this was a unique suggestion for me personally in my condition, it turned out that this is one of the few synagogues that still requests that you wear a mask during services. So I put on the mask and truth be told, it was the happiest I felt putting on a mask since the pandemic began.

Anyways, I'm not going to keep going on and on. It wasn't all that bad. It was close enough to Purim that I'm sure people made the connection and figured out that maybe I didn't have time to even out things out before Shabbat. It also gave me an opportunity to make people smile,

make people laugh which I enjoy to do. It gave me the opportunity to flex that muscle of not carrying around what people think. And it allowed me to remember that I can never start to take myself too seriously. That the ego unchecked is as much of a spiritual liability as anything else. And you know, I've told you before, I've been doing this since I was a kid where my father told me, "This is what it means to be a Jew. You can never care what anyone else thinks." Ask Jeremy, over the years I would switch between various kippahs that different demographics wear. There's a felt black one that the ultra-Orthodox wear. Or a knit kippa that religious Zionist wear, or even a keffiyeh, I would just keep switching around which most people don't do. You usually settle into a box.

But I didn't want to ever get so connected to a specific identity, that it became calcified in my external trappings which then can come to define me and box me in internally as well, right? Which is even more tragic. But the older I get, the less frequent these exercises really became and the less important they seem to be. Because I started feeling like I know who I am inside and the external stuff seemed to be less relevant. Which is why I am not suggesting that anyone else do this or anything else like this. I'm not even 100% sure it was the right thing for me to do. But ultimately, I did it because at that moment on Purim, staring into the mirror, I really felt that in my heart, for me, I had the opportunity for authentic growth which was unique to Purim. An opportunity to take off a mask and remember that the real battle of this world is not on the outside, that it's on the inside.

And so my friends, I want to bless us all that we're able to really sometimes take off our masks when we need to, that we're able to internalize the truth that everything that happens in our lives and in the entire world is orchestrated by the ultimate King of the World. And as we approach Pesach, right, that's what's coming up, as we approach Passover, may we be prepared to see that just as HaShem runs the world through nature, from behind the mask, the great day will come when all the masks are removed, which will usher in the ultimate redemption before the eyes of the entire world. The greater redemption and revelation that we could ever imagine. So I love you both, I love all of you, love you Jeremy, love you all in this fellowship. Shaena's very excited that now I get to go upstairs and take off the rest of my beard and start the healing process of regrowth.

Jeremy

I thought I dared you to keep it until Passover, you said you were going to accept the dare.

Ari

I actually said that to Shaena, and she said, "Please, no don't!" So I'm not going to do that. That's just too crazy.

Jeremy



Well I'm really proud of you that you kept it all the way through Sunday so our fellowship could see what you looked like on Purim. Excellent. Good for you. Thank you, Ari.

Ari

I'm going to shut off my camera so I'm not distracting to people.

Jeremy

Ok, good move. Alright. That was Ari on Purim. It was meaningful just to look at him. And especially if you're a little bit woozy, it was like, "What did he do again? Why did he do that? Is Dvash scared of him now?" But the truth is, a lot happened on Purim and I felt like I learned a lot, I was taught a lot, I just felt like there was a lot of revelation. And I felt like a lot of the revelation was actually preparing us going into the redemption season. You know, Passover is a time where what can I do? Like there's a Messianic sort of fervor that I get around Passover because there is this tradition that as the first redemption will be, so too the last redemption will be.

And I just...there's something brewing in the world. We're in the Shmittah year right now. There is this kind of trouble brewing in the north. There's just too much that's on the plate for us not to at least be in the expectation that something amazing could happen. And there is a pathway to really experience that. Now if it happens or not, I'm best friends with Ari. He thinks that every day something amazing is going to happen, something life-altering is going to happen, the world is going to be fundamentally shifted. So I'm one of the most like, I don't know what the word is...sort of end of dazers that I know, but Ari makes me look like I'm in the minor leagues. But I think that there is a healthy posture that any day, Mashiach can come, any day, the whole world can be flipped upside down, all of the things that look like they are so bad...in just one moment, Purim can happen. And the tree that all of the big Tech and the politicians and the big everything, was...all the plans that were being made...the bad guy is hung up on the tree that he constructed himself. And that can just happen in the blink of an eye.

And there is a process that we go through from Purim until Passover that is guiding us along the path of sort of how to walk in those ways. And so, you know, so I'll just...I'm gonna start from the beginning. When you look at the story of Purim, and you're looking like what's happening there. Haman wasn't raging a war against the Jewish people. It wasn't against Israel, it was really a direct attack on God. I mean he said, "This world, it's absurd, it's all random. There's no meaning beyond what you can see." That's why Haman is called Agagi, from Agog. Gog means "roof," meaning what you see is what you get. There is nothing beyond the physical. And then what do we come and say? No, no, no. The physical is just the mask that we put on, but there's an identity behind the mask. That's sort of the contra of why we wear masks on Purim. Because Haman says, "Sorry, there's a gog here. There's a roof that what you see is what you get. There is no meaning outside the roof. There's no meaning beyond this world that we have. There's no spiritual behind the physical. That's it. There's a roof and we're just

kind of stuck in the roof and you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to annihilate the chosen people. And the destiny of the chosen people. I'm going to annihilate them with a roll of the dice. I'm going to annihilate them because why not? I'm just going to choose a lottery. I'm going to just have absolute randomness, seal the fate of the quote-unquote chosen people who were chosen to have a destiny. And I'm gonna prove not to the Jewish people, but to God, Himself that my lottery is going to define reality and not His plan and not His promise."

So, it really wasn't a fight against Israel, it was a display for the entire world where God was being called to action. He's like, "Alright, well here we go. I'm gonna prove to the world that this world is safe, this whole world should be in doubt."

And that's why his name Haman, which Ari just mentioned, the numerical value is doubt. Haman and doubt on like a numbers level are the same word. And he's like, "I'm just going to show the world there's random doubt, that's it. That's all we got here in this world." And the pur, that's the holiday of Purim, is named after the lottery that Haman chose. And so it's a celebration of that lottery. And what you see is that that lottery became our biblical holiday because there is no lottery with Israel. There is no chance with Israel. There is only destiny with Israel. And Israel is the witness. That is why Israel was chosen. To be a witness to the world. That when the world says, "Nah..it's just random, it's just the way it is, that there's this one people, descendants of Abraham that have every single promise in the Bible fulfilled through them." And we were exiled and we were returned and our language was revived and we're getting stronger and we're growing closer to God. And look at what's happening? The largest funeral in all of Israel's history wasn't a celebrity, it wasn't a politician, it was the greatest Torah scholar, brought out between a half a million to a million people in the streets. Israel is going through a spiritual revolution right before our eyes.

Now you can always choose to ignore the promises of the Bible. You can always choose to say, "Well, the world is just random. And what's happening in Israel is just a random act of history." Where there is this ancient people, really the only ancient people that exists in the world since the times of the Bible – the Canaanites, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Amorites, the Moabites...all of the ancient peoples of the Bible. The Egyptians are not the Egyptians of today, the Greeks are not the Greeks of yesterday. Like all of their gods, all of those peoples, they're all gone. But there is one God, and there is one people and there is one Land. And somehow we're all back together again. And so for those that want to see fate, that want to see HaShem's Hand behind it. That's really what the holiday of Purim is.

And really, you know, I want to bring up, and this is a Torah that we taught last year, but the words Megillat Esther is the scroll of Esther. But those words mean something in the Hebrew language. And it's teaching us what this stage, the last book of the Bible is. The last message given to us is that you need to be able to see beyond the mask. And so, can we get this slide up of Megillat Esther?



Megilah means scroll, but the word megilah also means “reveal.” And Esther is of course her name, but her name wasn’t really Esther. Ashtar is like the Easter bunny. That was a Babylonian name at best. A Syrian name, a Zero-Astrain name. Ashtar was like the name of one of the goddesses that she sort of adopted as her slave name in the exile. Her name was Hadassah. So why do we call it Esther? We should have called it Megilat Hadassah. But we call it Esther and she’s called Esther throughout the entire Megillah because the name is “hidden.” Esther means in Hebrew, “hidden.” So

imagine how beautiful that is. The scroll of Esther literally means “to reveal the hidden.” And that’s the one book in the Bible we all know, that God’s name isn’t mentioned even once. And in fact, you read the entire scroll of Esther, and you’re like, why is this book even in the Bible? God’s not mentioned, there’s no like religious act, there’s no miracle that happens.

But when you read the story, you can’t help but just be uplifted that God orchestrated everything. Kind of like a master chess player. That if I’m playing chess and he wants to take my horse and somehow manipulate me to put my horse on the right corner of the board, he could do that. I can move all my pieces around, but if he’s a chess master, he can figure out how to make my horse go all the way over there. And then somehow, we’re relating to God in a different way. We’re revealing the hidden Hand of God. And that’s really what this stage of history that we’re in now. It’s like you can see the mask of Facebook and Google and the Big Tech companies that run the world. They’re just a mask.

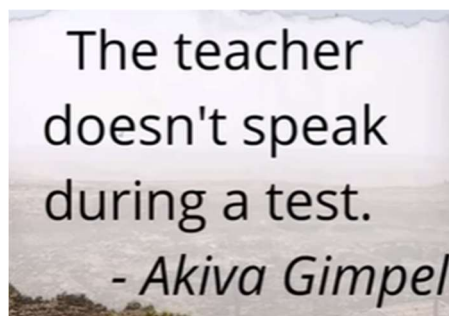
And it’s like the people of Israel are here and look what’s happening now. We could now be all of our attention on the Ukraine and the Russian war. But I’m noticing something else. I’m noticing tens of thousands of Jews from Russia and the Ukraine that are making Aliyah right now. Coming from the north and they’re coming back home, like a huge influx of Jews is returning to the Land of Israel. Fox News isn’t reporting about that. CNN isn’t reporting about that because they’re not looking for that. But as this Ukrainian reality is unfolding, one of the largest Jewish communities in the world, outside of America is Russia and the Ukraine. And they are coming home in the thousands. And without this sort of like, I don’t know, this shaking up, it wouldn’t happen. And Jeremiah says, “First He’s going to send the fishers and then He’s going to send the hunters.” If the Jews don’t come back because they hear the inspiration and the Torah coming from the Land of Israel, He’s going to send hunters to scare them out of their lands. And that’s what’s happening right before our very eyes.

We look at the last book given to us in the Hebrew Bible, the final message that the relationship we’re going to have with HaShem until the very end, is that His Hand will be hidden, and we need the eyes to reveal the hidden Hand of God. We literally need to Megilla Esther. We need

to reveal the hidden. And the world keeps on evolving and the world keeps on developing and the Torah keeps on evolving. And the Torah keeps on developing. It's like from Abraham, there was a Torah that he lived by. And then Moses came along and there was a Torah that was given there. And we're all striving in this long process to really learn how to walk in God's light.

And over Purim, I had probably the most meaningful moment in my time was...it was like in the morning time and I was already a little bit dizzy. I had like a couple of l'chaim's with a couple of friends. And then I saw my second oldest son, Akiva. And he had come home from Yeshiva. This was his first year where he sleeps about five days out of the week in the Yeshiva and then he comes home. So he wakes up at 6:30 and he finishes learning at about 8. Because half the day he's studying Torah and Judaic studies and then half the day he's studying sciences and math and secular studies. So he has a full day. So he's already finishing at 8:00, so he's just like, "I'll just sleep here." And it's kind of like summer camp for him. He loves it. They just love their school. And it's amazing. But it was my first time not celebrating Purim with Akiva. And I saw him come in. I was so excited to see him. Akiva, I know, he was going to go out with friends then, because he's already 9<sup>th</sup> grade, he's 15 years old, he doesn't want to be with his mom and dad for Purim. And I was like, "Oh Akiva, I gotta tell you a Torah, I gotta just share this Torah with you."

And then he's like, "Abba, I want to share a Torah with you." And I'm like, "Really? Ok, let's hear it." And he's like, "You know? Sometimes people feel like God doesn't answer their prayers. And sometimes people feel like God's not listening or maybe God's not speaking to them. But you know? Today when I was in Purim, I was thinking about school and how it works." And then he said a line that literally, I mean I think it's a line that I'm going to carry with me now for a very, very long time. I was so excited about it, I asked Tabitha to make me a slide.



And he said, "The teacher doesn't speak during a test." Akiva Gimpel, I was like...what are you a spiritual master teaching me the Torah? What is going on here? Like God is the teacher, the Torah literally means "to teach, to guide." It's like sometimes during a test, you know, the teacher doesn't give you the answers. The teacher doesn't speak during a test. It's like, that's ok. Like right now if you feel like God isn't speaking to you, God's not listening. Abraham

was called, lech lecha. Go forth to the Land that I will show you. For weeks Abraham is walking and there's no one in sight, no one in his ear, no one in his heart. The Midrash says that he was plagued with so many doubts. The devil came up to him and said, "You didn't hear right. You're going in the wrong direction. You think you're supposed to go to Israel? No, no, you're supposed to go the other way." Constantly harassing Abraham in his mind. Doubts and fears

and there was no communication. And it's like, what is going on? I felt this inner calling to go and act and I'm acting on that, and now I feel like God's not listening. God's not answering me.

And then Akiva said, "The teacher doesn't speak during a test." And I feel like that was just so meaningful for me. Because you know, I've raised Akiva since he was a second old, and all of a sudden now my 15-year-old is teaching me Torah. And I was like, that is just...that is the oral Torah. That's like the Torah continues to be taught and continues to be revealed. And all of us are sort of on this path towards revelation. And it seems like that's one of the most fundamental messages of Purim. It's that the open miracles that we see in Passover, they're closed for right now. And HaShem is going to work within nature, within the order of the world, to be revealed. And it's to reveal the oneness within reality. It's not that there's a reality that happens, and then God needs to come in and then intervene. But it's like, no, no. It's a higher level. It's like reality IS His will manifest. It's reality itself IS the will of God, IS a miracle. It's just we need to take off the masks to see it. He's right here and we don't need to scream out loud in the streets like Mordecai did. He's like, you know, there's one part of Mordecai where he hears the bad decree and it's like he goes out into the streets and he's calling out to God. It's like, no, no, no. HaShem is so close He can hear our thoughts. It's like He's right here with us. We just have to take away the mask.

It's like I was thinking about it over Purim. I said, "Let's say there was a bold act, an in-your-face act of God, like a blatant miracle. The earth opened its mouth, an earthquake shook Moscow, and swallowed up all of Putin's palace with all of his ministers that are running this war. And then Russia calls off the war with the Ukraine and that would be the end of what could have been WWII. I think that if that were to happen, there would be many months of like absolute shock. And there would be repentance and people would really take it seriously, like oh my goodness. It was World War and it was a Divine intervention. It was a miracle! And then, I don't know exactly how long – two months, three months, six months, 12 months, two years...at some point, the world would move on and just go back to their regular ways. And like, that was a weird thing that happened. There was this...I don't know, it was like an earthquake. What a coincidence. What a supek. That's just the way things happen sometimes. What a lottery.

And that's you know, blatant miracles are powerful, but they're never ever long lived. Like their effect wears off. Days after Sinai, they had just had national revelation of the Ten Commandments. Just a few days later, they're worshipping the golden calf. It's like, what? How did that happen? Days after the splitting of the Red Sea, the people of Israel like, "Is God really with us? Or is He? Where is He, we don't know." It's like days, what? It's like those are not just stories of the Bible, those are statements about the nature of men, the nature of faith in miracles.

And so, what the book of Esther is telling us is like, "This is it now. We're at a stage now where we need something more fundamental. We need something different." It's like a paradigm shift of how we see reality and how we see God. Esther is a woman. She's the last hero of the Bible and she's the only one that's really...like a book is named after this hero that saves the people of Israel. And it's like all these heroes, you know, all of them represent aspects of God. And you know, Moses as a savior, Esther as a savior. Those are two totally different aspects. They're different like realities, like the way the Jews were saved in Egypt is the opposite of the way that they were saved in the times of Esther. And there's a reason why Esther was chosen as a woman to represent this miracle. And she represents the feminine aspect of HaShem. That's the aspect that is to be revealed to us in the final generation. The feminine aspect that we would call the Shekinah. The Shekinah that ends with an ah at the end, like ish is man, isha is woman. So Shekinah is the feminine aspect of HaShem.

And what does that mean? There's a fatherly aspect of God, it's our Father in heaven. And it's kind of like, you know, the Father goes out to work and the mother's taking care of the kids. And the mother is like, "Oh wait till your father comes home, I'm gonna tell him what you guys did." Well, that's like one aspect, where like the world sort of goes into where it goes and then God needs to come swoop in and save us from that situation. The mother is a constant presence with her children. She's constantly nursing their children, a caregiver who's always there. It's like to see ain ode mildvado, everywhere all the time. It's to see that there is none other than HaShem. There's no need for Him to come and swoop in because everything that's unfolding is a direct reaction to our actions and it is all guiding us to where we need to go.

It's like the Torah is constantly teaching us, like the practice of good, the practice of loving one another. That's the natural consequence of loving God, of fearing God. And if humanity is close to God, can try to strive to be a little bit closer to his light, a little bit more open to receive that light. Police and prisons, they're not really necessary. If everyone's obedient to God, there would be no wars. There would be peace. And just...it would be naturally, voluntarily practiced by everyone. That's the place that the world is heading. When the knowledge of God covers the world like knowledge covers the sea. And you can see, like what's happening is really, it's a war again. It goes right back to Haman. There's like so much sadness in the world, there's so much stupidity in the world, like such bad decisions are being made. It's like happy is the man who fears the Lord. That's what King David says. If you just live a life where your goal is to be good, the more good you do, the more good you're going to get. It's just an equation. When you are good, you will be happy. You'll feel good. And the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. It's like, you want happiness? You want wisdom? Once you remove good and evil from the equation, where you're really doubting that that exists. Where you could see the atrocities of the world, the horrors of people suffering, but not just suffering. Suffering that is being caused intentionally by other people and say, "Ah, whatever. It's the same as someone giving charity and helping the poor. Someone that's oppressing and hurting and torturing the

poor.” Obviously, there can be no wisdom in such a worldview. So the beginning of the wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

So what are we trying to do here? It’s like, it’s to spread a new consciousness. That is the core of the mission. And the masks of Purim, it’s kind of like every religion, every label, every piece of clothing, every language, every culture, all of it...it’s just a mask. And under all of those veils that people put on themselves, is a soul. And every single soul is directly connected to the source of all souls. It’s like every soul is a ray of light from the same source of life. And everyone has a choice, to create who they like...bring that out. They have a destiny that’s embedded in them. And really, it’s like to be a believer is to believe in that light. That it can overpower and overcome and break through all of those veils that are kind of locking us in.

And the mask is saying, “Listen, Ari chose to be a half-bearded mad man on Purim. And so, I chose to be a cowboy. I would just love to be like a Texas cowboy. Like a real cowboy hat. It doesn’t look indigenous to Judea, but I somehow want to be a Judean cowboy on Purim.” And that’s what I wanted to be on Purim. At any moment though, every person has the choice to create the character of their lives. You’re the actor, you’re the director, you’re the author of the script of your life’s story. That’s what Purim is telling you. It’s like you can choose to be Esther. It’s like relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place. Don’t you worry about it. God’s plan is unfolding like an expert chess master. Everything is good. He’s gonna win, believe me. Now Esther, you can choose to sort of like disappear into the ether, or you can choose to step up and be a character in the story that’s unfolding, the story of the people of Israel, the story of biblical destiny. You have a chance now to rise up wherever you are and be a part of an amazing drama and be connected and guided within that.

And so, everything we see in this world is a mask. And there’s a deeper personality behind the mask, that’s the key. It’s like so don’t get confused with the physicality. I had one guy that came out to Purim and he’s just going through a really rough time in life. Having a hard time in his work and having a hard time with his marriage and just down. And he just felt like, I just don’t have it in me. I just don’t have it in me to succeed in my marriage. He wants to succeed and he just felt like, “I’m just defeated.”

And so I took him to our pool. I told you guys, I’m like John the Baptist. I’m just getting everyone into the cold water. And I’m like, I want you to come with me right now. And we’re both a little bit at this point, like a little bit drunk. And I’m like, I just want you to come with me to the pool right now. And I take him to the pool, walk away from like the party that’s going on and we walk over, right over there, that’s where it is, that’s what the pool looks like. And the water is freezing. I mean the morning of Purim, I think there was frost on my windshield. It’s cold in the Judean night still. And he’s like kind of very weak. That’s how he felt, very weak. He’s like, “I just can’t go into that water.” And I’m like, “Of course you can. It’s like just a mask. There’s something behind this mask of weakness that is able to overcome. And then when

you're in the water, you can stay in for long, you're going to want to come out because it's going to feel uncomfortable. You're going to feel a sense of like pain, but it's not really pain. It's just purifying. And you're the source that's behind that mask. It can overcome the physical. There is a force inside you that can stay inside the water, even though your body wants to come out. That's what needs to be energized, that's what needs to be strengthened. And it'll help you in your work, it'll help you with your family. It'll give you an inner strength cause that inner strength is within you."

And lo and behold, somehow, I'm a good salesman, I convinced him to jump into that cold water. And he jumped in the cold water and I turned on my stopwatch because that's what I do because you need to stay in for at least 30 seconds, but ideal three minutes. And I'm just timing it, I'm like, "Listen, you've already been in for 20 seconds." And he's screaming at me. He was really angry. He was saying, "I hate you, Jeremy. Why you made me so painful!"

"I mean, you're doing great, you're doing great. Forty-five seconds, just stay strong!" And I'm like encouraging home to stay in. And then after about a minute and a half, sort of like just kind of in the water then. And I saw like the shift happen. Instead of like being out of control and just being in the pain of his body, he's like, "Wait a minute." He sort of got control of whatever that is inside you, that's beyond your body. That your body is telling you to do something, urging you to. There's a place inside you that is the source behind the mask. That's like, wait a minute, I'm in control here. And then he came out of the water like a new man. It was like he did absolute tshuvah. It was just so beautiful. And so, the mask that we have, you know, it's like what we do, is we live...it's like the Jewish tradition. And it was like all taught to us through the Temple sacrifices. It's to embody knowledge. It's to take something that we know, act it out, dramatize it, teach your kids, get them dressed up, jump in the water. Just experience it so the knowledge goes from your head, all the way down into your heart.

So another guy comes up to me on Purim and he's like, "Listen, I'm just disoriented. I'm so confused. We were all obsessed with Corona. Corona just disappeared and now everyone's talking about Ukraine and Russia. No one's talking about like what is right, what is left, what am I doing, what's going on? And I just...I don't know what to do. I'm absolutely disoriented." And I said, "I think you've had too much to drink, but if you're disoriented, I have an answer. And I don't know where I came up with this, but I said, I think the answer is in the very beginning of the Torah." I said, "Well, if we're disoriented, we have to go all the way back to the basics. If you're disoriented says the very beginning, God created light and dark, that's the basics. Let's reorient ourselves. There's light and there's dark. Distance yourself from the dark and walk towards the light. You have to have that fundamental breakdown. That's how Abraham started his journey. He saw the darkness of his time. He saw the child sacrifice. He saw the evil. He saw the might made right. He saw just the dark and he said, that cannot be."



There is another way. It's like the Jewish people gave the world a real gift and this is going to be like a horrible, horrible thing to say. But Auschwitz was hell manifest on earth. If life is hard and life is a lot of times tragic and difficult and that's going to be for everyone. But then all of a sudden, you see people that turned evil into an art. And that enjoyed the torture of the weak and took the Jewish people and starved them and actually manifested hell on earth. The whole world could see it and they still can because there is no historic event that has been documented better than the holocaust. We actually saw hell on earth. So everyone now knows where not go. That was the dark.

Well how do we get as far away from that as possible? God created light and God created dark. If we can get good and evil in our hearts straight away, we have where to go. And so the reality of creation is that there's good and evil from the get-go, and we can tune into the frequency of light. That light that's beyond our bodies. We have like a soul, that's our antenna. It's like a sacred antenna. There's an ultimate good, and we can actually tune into that. The ultimate light because that light is inside us. And so what do we need to do with that? You know, it's like a lot of the modern scientific world, they see our consciousness generated in the brain itself. It's like, that's like...they've taken the mask really seriously. All there is, is physicality. And thinking about our brain as the source of consciousness and our source of our soul. Like there is no soul, there's just the brain, that that's everything that we have.

I look at those scientists, and I look at them like primitive men walking into a living room looking for the blonde woman giving a weather forecast on the TV, like in the television set. Like trying to bang on the TV, like the woman is inside the TV, like that's just so clearly...that is not where the woman is. The TV is like sort of a receptor, an antenna, it's getting some sort of image that's being projected. That's the right way to see the world. There's a spiritual reality that's beyond the physical and our body just is an antenna. Our soul is an antenna within the physical mask of our body. Tehila taught me that analogy of the woman in the TV, and I've been thinking about that ever since. That that's what Purim is teaching us. All of it is just a mask, we have to be able to see beyond it.

And so how do you get closer to it? How do we get closer to that source that's inside us that's beyond our body, to the will in us that's able to overcome our body, to the place inside us that can guide us to the light? Because inside us we have a natural instinct, this inner moral law that some how's written on our hearts. How do we unveil it? How do we bring the Torah that Jeremiah says, "Listen, one day it's going to be written on all of our hearts." It's going to be written on our hearts, we're not going to need the Torah anymore. It's going to be so clear to us that we will know how to walk in the light without even needing to open up a book.

So how do we do that? There's a training, in fact, that's really what the Torah is training us to become. To become those people. And so, the next stage of creation, if we go through the stages of creation as how to orient ourselves in life as we maybe leave through the

disorientation of Purim toward Passover. Or maybe just starting life in general. First there's light and dark and then what happens? Then there's like matter that's created, water and land. And then out of the water and land, growth happens. It's like growth from absolute matter, that's the most basic reality of creation. The world was created to flourish. That's what it means when God created the world in love. He created it for it to grow, for human beings, we were created to grow and to flourish just like flowers, just like the trees. All of us are a part of that, and our natural purpose is to grow.

And that's why I mean, for me, in the last, I would say at least a year of my life, my primary prayer is, "HaShem, please help me grow. Help me grow upright." That's the service here. That's the spiritual work of this time. Because we're going to grow whether we like it or not. So I say, HaShem, I want to grow because I know that's what you want of me. Because the growth is going to happen. It's going to happen whether we like it or not. I've never seen a 70-year-old teenager. A 70-year-old has a lot of life wisdom. He's been through a lot. He's seen a lot, he knows a lot, he's grown a lot. And now there's some people that have chosen to grow and some people, the growth just happens to them. And so, I say, "HaShem, I want to grow because I know that that's my purpose. And I want...please help me grow. Now don't bring it on too strong. I want to just...be a merciful Coach here. I just, I really want to be better and I want to grow. But help me grow upright. Because I don't want to grow crooked. Because I know that if I grow crooked, eventually something's going to have to straighten me out. And I don't want to be straightened out, I want You to straighten me out."

That is the spiritual work of this time. And what do we do right after Purim? We start cleaning up our house. That's the embodied knowledge that's happening there. It's like, start cleaning up shop, dramatize it, act it out, teach it to your children. This time until Passover, the mission is....get your house in order, clean it up. But I mean, clean! Get behind the furniture, pull out the fridge, clean out the corners behind the fridge that you don't clean out during the year. That's what you need to do now. It's like this is the time more than any other time to really get on your hands and knees and deal with what you need to fix.

And you know, for me, it's a great example in the Megillah. You know, we see this story of Haman, he's been invited by the king, he's on top of the world, he's got his decree to destroy his enemy in place, he has the ring on his finger. For all intents and purposes, he's the most powerful person in the kingdom. He comes out of the palace and sees Mordecai and Mordechai enrages him. In Esther chapter five, verse nine, can we put that up on the screen?

Then Haman went forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he would not stand up or even move for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

- Esther 5:9

It's like he had every reason in the world to be so happy. And Haman just went...there's that one thing, gosh, that Mordecai, just couldn't let go of that. And he came home and instead of talking to his wife about how amazing things are and how powerful he is and how he's going to kill all the Jews and Mordechai is going to get it. He's just complaining and complaining about Mordechai. And then his wife says, "Why don't you build him that tree?"

And it's almost like this chain reaction that unfolds from Haman's life that he couldn't just let the one annoying thing in his life. Let that go and really focus on all the blessings of your life. And then, as he focuses on the one thing that's his real challenge right now, from that, everything horrible unfolded in his life.

And so, what is spring cleaning? Well, it's a universal phenomenon, spring cleaning, that's like a saying in the world. But it's really a Torah command. It's like, clean up the debris that is blocking the reception of your spiritual antenna. Take off the mask, like a solar collector that needs to receive the light to work to get the heat going, you got to wipe off the dust so it can like receive the light. So the same too, it's like when we have that like one thing, because there's always going to be a snake in the garden. There's always going to be that one thing in life that is our challenge. But if you let that be, that's what you got to find and clean it out.

And that's what's so beautiful is that you know, happiness in the Western world is like when you achieve a goal when you get that degree, when you get the promotion, when you get that raise, that's like the happiness that you've been working for. You got accepted to that law firm, but what's wrong with that approach is that until you get that raise, or until you get into that law firm, you're frustrated, you're anxious. Until the goal is met, you're not really happy. And then once the goal is accomplished, the happiness evaporates pretty quickly because the goal is accomplished now and now what are you looking for? And there's a different type of joy that the Torah is teaching us about. It's a joy doing what you were fashioned to do.

And spring is on the horizon now, and we're all called to clean up shop. We're all called to grow and how do we grow? It's like, clean off the debris that's on the antenna by putting our house in order. And as we clean our exteriors of our house, really were just cleaning the chambers of our heart. We pull back the mask, and we see like, no, it's not just the outside game, but there's an inside game here. And we're not looking at the person in the TV set. No, we realize that we're trying to like go in a little bit deeper, trying to go to the source of that reception. So when the debris is interrupting our reception, it's time to clean up shop. And so, as we clean, we grow and then the joy and freedom are coming this Passover.

So, I just want to bless all of you that as we clean our hearts, as we clean our homes, as we leave the era of the hidden Hand of God, Passover is when God becomes revealed again. And so we should all be blessed to experience the full redemption, entirely. All masks off. And you should know that until then, you are blessed from Zion.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

Ari and I are praying for all of you. We bless you with a beautiful new year that's coming up. Spring is coming, life is coming, and you are all beyond blessed. Thank you so much and we'll see you next week.