

Session 227

Behar/Bechukotai – A Blueprint for Redemption

25 May 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8PN6DOesio>

Ari

It is very good to see all of you. Big time. Today was quite a day, quite a day. Usually, today is where I settle in, I dig in deep, I bring together what I want to share with you in this Fellowship. But today was different. The first thing in the morning I went to Jerusalem for some emergency dental work after a crazy reverberating tooth thing that happened on Shabbat, whatever. I don't even know what to say about that. But I had to go first thing in the morning and immediately upon returning to the mountain, there was a siren indicating an incoming missile. How many of you have this red alert thing on your phone that it goes off when missiles are coming into Israel? Wow, that's a of you. So anytime missiles come in, you guys are hearing it, it's waking you up regardless of when and your prayers are definitely felt, powerfully.

So, you know I had to go immediately when the siren went off, I of course high tailed it in my ranger to the nearby village of Ibei HaNachal where my children are in school to protect the pre-school and the kindergarten, I don't want to get into the whole thing. But you know, our sweet little precious children to make sure they were protected and safe and that they felt protected and safe. My daughter, I may have told you, when she plays, they build a little fort and a hut and she's the teacher and Shiloh is the student. There's always a siren that goes off. And they always build, and not only their little fort and their hut, but they have to build a safe room that they run into when that happens. That's just already like part of their games, it's part of their life.

And then the missiles come in. Here's a picture of the intercepted missile, which fell right here in the Hebron Mountains, just right there, just fell. It could have fallen on anyone. There're so many miracles. Just last week, I think it was Friday morning, we don't even know it, what God is doing behind the scenes. One of the missiles the Houthis were launching actually detonated right there, right there in their launching area, killing 19 of these Houthis terrorists. God is just doing so much for us behind the scenes, in front of the scenes, there's so many miracles, we don't even know the half of it.

You know, then we had a group come out today called AFSI, Americans for a Safe Israel, I believe it stands for. And in this group there were veteran, beloved Fellowship members. There was Ann Stacy, Mike Isley, and others. It was just so good to see these people and to be with them.

Others in the Fellowship, also, just truly it was so beautiful. I mean, these days are just so filled with a mix of so much light and so much darkness, it's really hard to make sense of it all.

So, before I even try, I want to open up with a prayer.

HaShem, we gather before You today as brothers and sisters, united in faith, in purpose and in love for Your Land and Your people. We thank You for the gift of this Fellowship, this special time which we sanctify to draw close to You and to draw close to each other. HaShem, Master of the Universe, shine Your light upon Israel, protect her borders, strengthen her leaders with wisdom and bring unity and courage to all who dwell within her. May Your spirit rest upon those who stand in truth and righteousness for her sake.

We lift up to You the many needs within this Fellowship, those seeking healing in body, mind, and soul. We ask for Your mercy upon those recovering from surgeries, battling illness, and navigating chronic pain. You are the Rophe Ne'eman, the Faithful Healer. Pour out Your healing waters upon all of this Fellowship who need it and let restoration and healing flow like mighty waters. HaShem, we hold in our prayers those who are preparing for or recovering from medical journeys, operations, diagnoses, and uncertainty. May Your Hand guide the doctors, steady the caregivers and bring a deep inner peace in the midst of what feels fragile and vulnerable. We pray for comfort for the children, courage for the mothers and deep, restful healing for all. We cry out on behalf of those battling inner wounds, traumas from long ago that are still echoing in the soul. You are the One who sees the heart and mends what no human hand can reach. Bring freedom from addictions, peace to those with PTSD, for there is so much of that amongst the mighty soldiers in Your Land. And please HaShem, bring a renewal of hope in those who feel forgotten and broken.

Master of the World, we bring before You those longing for financial help, emotional help, spiritual help. Open the gates of blessing. Provide jobs for the jobless, homes for the homeless, clarity for the confused, and shalom for those living in tension and in anxiety and in isolation. You are the God Who sees, the God Who provides, and the God Who redeems. We continue to pray for the protection and return of the hostages, for the families of Israel's brave defenders, and for the Land that You have chosen. Bring peace upon Your people and courage to those standing on the front lines. Shelter them beneath Your wings. Let light burst forth from Zion and truth arise from the earth. Let Your glory be known across the nations.

And finally, HaShem, bless this Fellowship. May our gathering today bring You joy. Please guide us in every step. Bless the work of our hands and establish this Fellowship as a force for healing,

for awakening and for Your glory in the world. We offer all this in humility and trust knowing that You hear every whisper, You see every tear, and answer every call in perfect timing. Amen.

Ok, now I was going to introduce Jeremy and Tehila, which I usually do at the beginning of the Fellowship, but I just found out that there's an important military exercise which I need to participate in, it's 6:45 p.m. So I need to leave no later than 6:40 p.m., maybe a minute later. So they'll take over then. And so I will just dive in right now because time is of the essence.

Ok, so many of you may know that every year we complete a full cycle of reading of our precious Torah and so due to the variations in the Hebrew calendar involving leap year and things like that, there are times that we have a double parsha, a double portion. And this week is one of those times. We read the double portion of Behar and Bechukotai, which contain some of the most beautiful, central, and important things in the entire Torah, if you ask me. Although, I guess in the Torah's defense, I find that at one point or another, I've said that about nearly every single one of the Torah portions. So I guess when it comes to the Word of God, I'm just not sure that you can ever really say, "This is more important than that." You just can't do that. It's not up to us to know these things.

But anyways, these two portions really do connect in the most fundamental way, which boil down to its core is this. Behar emphasizes the laws of the Land. Sh'mita, which is the Sabbatical year which I never understood until I became somewhat of a farmer in the Land. Yovel, the Jubilee, every 49<sup>th</sup> or 50<sup>th</sup> year. The shofar is sounded on the Day of Atonement and everything is returned to its owner, there is a real redemption, everything is brought back to its original place, its right place. And the basic, yet revolutionary idea that the Land belongs to God. Bottom line is, are we or are we not being faithful stewards of this sacred, holy Land. That's the question that this portion forces us to ask ourselves. And then we get to the rewards and the punishments which relate primarily to how we treat the Land and how we treat each other. And so, if we are faithful stewards of the Land, which we learn how to do in Behar, this will lead to the blessings of Bechukotai. And then neglect and abuse of the Land and each other, lead to the curses of that same portion in all of the exile.

Which by the way, I keep telling myself again and again, when I'm just filled with rage as the Arabs on the road consider the most beautiful, majestic rolling hills of Judea their own personal trash can. I don't know if this sounds like a stereo type, I'm just saying what has been my overwhelming experience. They just roll down the window and throw out unbelievable amounts of garbage. And disgustingness with wanton disregard for the Land which they claim on CNN to love. I mean it's endemic. They throw out so much trash from their windows, I've never seen anything like it. It's like they go out of their way to do so. Come visit us out here

and every village you pass by, you can see. It's just an absolute trash heap. You'll see exactly what I'm talking about. I mean, forget the trash. They do their best to burn it all down. They issue official, governmental incitement to arson, which is of course joyfully carried out whenever the opportunity presents itself, when everything is dry and vulnerable, that's when they do it. I mean, just check out these government videos, issued by their government.



Tabitha was trying to find translation for that, but you don't really need it. It's not like they're like, "Do not do this. Do not light things..." No, they're saying, this is what the call is to do. This is the current manifestation of your call to jihad. Burn it all down.

We saw thousands of dunams of forests, each tree planted with love and care. I grew up with these little blue JNF tzedakah boxes. Have you ever seen those? Any Jewish restaurant you went into, anything that was JNF, you put your change in there, you put your money in there and it was all to plant trees. To burn down to the ground in what was proven to be the implementation of those very arson videos. And the fires and the trash, I mean how can they even claim to love this Land?

And in contrast to that, the other day I was in the playground with my children, and I looked up and I saw Dvash and Shiloh in the bushes behind the playground. They weren't on the slides or the swings, they were in the bushes behind the playground. What were they doing? I couldn't see. I went to see what was going on and this is what I saw.



Ari

Dvash, what are you doing? Tell me again, what are you doing?

Dvash

Cleaning up.

Ari

Cleaning up, what?

Dvash

Cleaning up the ground.

Ari

From the ground of what?

Dvash

Eretz Yisrael.

(end of the video)

Ari

Her hands were just filled with trash. I said, “What are you cleaning up?” “The ground of eretz Yisrael.” They do that all the time. They just go around picking up trash wherever they go. And you know, I don’t think it’s an accident. One of the teachings that we learned together in a recent Fellowship, it really entrenched itself in my soul. It really planted roots, deep within me. And I don’t remember the exact context of it, maybe one of you could remind me of it sometime, but it’s the idea that we are all essentially fractals. Maybe that sounds too scientific, I just don’t know a better word. But fractal is a great word, you can look it up after the Fellowship and see what I’m talking about.

We’re all descended from Adam and Eve, and we are all sparks of light who have descended here in the world to rectify something within them. Because within Adam was Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. That’s true. But also, Yishmael and Esau and Pharaoh and Amalek. We each have some spark of everything within us. Right? We spoke about this. The Pharaoh that thought he was God, that tried to control everything. Esau, that just wanted to give in to every impulse he has. We all have some sort of spark within us.

And hence when an adversary is thrust into our lives, when an enemy enters our orbit, one of the dimensions that I believe we’re supposed to do, is we’re to approach this enemy and see if we have some spark of that within us. And if we’re able to find that spark or better said that darkness within ourselves and to banish it if it needs to be banished, we contend with it how it needs to be contended with. And if we really do that spiritual work, I really believe, if God has illuminated our eyes and our understanding in this spiritual odyssey and this spiritual work, then it negates the need for them to be there anymore because we have contended with them within ourselves.

And so the portion tells us:

The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and settlers with Me.

-Vayikra 25:23

You know these jihadists clearly don't relate to the Land as given by God. And if they do, then their understanding of their god, of Allah...everyone's always like, "Oh, it's the same God, it's the same God. We both believe in one God." I don't think anymore, I just don't think it's the same God. It's not the same God. Maybe we both pray to one God, but I don't believe that Allah, that they pray to that they worship with murder and torture, that that is the God of Israel. They don't love the Land! And they don't cherish it as Psalm 102:14 says:

Your servants take delight in its stones, and cherish its dust.

-Psalm 102:14

We cherish the Land of Israel. And when we see the complete and total lack of love for the Land, we need to ask ourselves if our love for the Land is burning with the fire and dedication and self-sacrifice that it really should.

And I must say that when I was writing this Fellowship, I took a moment and I really thought about it. Is it? And I have to say, when I look at my brethren here in Judea, when I look at the nation as a whole, sending their sons, their fathers, their mothers, their daughters, into the line of fire for months, years now. I must say that the love is there. As a nation, we truly do love the Land and cherish it. When I look at God's people, when I look at the nation of Israel and our love for this Land, I can't help but to feel that the light of redemption is rising and is gaining warmth and the glory will soon shine to the entire world. We're just having to really earn it through pain and blood and tears.

Because the words for the "Land is mine. For you were strangers and settlers with Me," it's not only about Israel, it's about the world. It really does, on some level, it does turn the Western idea of ownership on its head. Because we don't own this Land, we don't even own our lives, everything. And I mean everything is on Divine lease. The Torah introduces Sh'mita, the Sabbatical, the seven year rest for the Land, not just as an agricultural policy, but it's like a national, spiritual realignment. Like once every seven years we let go. We release debts, we stop working, we trust. We trust. God says that there will be miraculous yield of fruit so that we will have fruit and grains and vegetables on those years so that we will have the Land when we don't work it. We just trust.

We see the truth of our experience in this Land, we see the truth of our experience in the world for what it truly is. Because faith isn't just a belief as we've gone over this Fellowship again and again. It's not a belief, such as words. It's a practice. Rav Kook taught in his book, Shabbat

Ha'Eretz, the Shabbat of the Land, about the Sabbatical Year, that only a people who can rest their Land, in honor of heaven, is truly free. Because Sh'mita is a spiritual declaration that the Land belongs to God. And that true freedom, Charut a'miti, true freedom or even better, liberty comes from aligning national life with Divine will. Letting the Land rest is a powerful statement of faith and of humility and of holiness. Not of individuals, but as the nation as a whole.

You know I've actually been flexing this muscle more now than I ever have in my life. Because you know never before have I felt we have more enemies in the world. I try to go to Facebook once every day, to YouTube once every day just to see where the algorithm throws at me. Just to be connected with what's out there and what's happening. And the amount of attacks on Israel and the Jewish people is more than I've ever seen. More people despise us and hate us, more genocidal jihadists want to murder us and our families than I can ever remember in my life. And I've never felt that I had more to lose than I do right now.

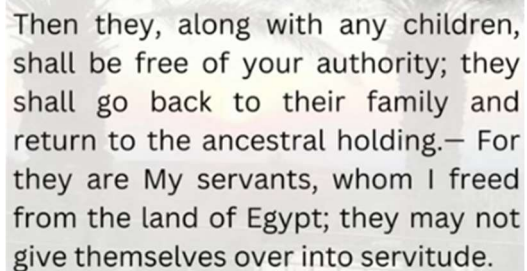
Because I worked through...you guys are more like my therapists than my fellow Fellowship members. You know, I've worked through this with you. You know the ferocity with which I love my wife and children. I'm obsessed. Every moment that we're together is like an eternity to me. Every moment is a taste of the world to come. And with that joy, naturally comes fear. The greater the love, the more fragile it is, the more the vulnerability and the more the potential loss. And it's really hard on me. I've never had to constantly work through those fears like I do now.

And so one of my great spiritual works, one of my great spiritual exercises, my great spiritual missions I guess, is constantly reminding myself that just like the Land itself doesn't belong to me, my wife and my children, they're not mine. They've been entrusted to me for safe-keeping. Entrusted to me to love them and to guide them and to shower them with light and love, cherish them and take care of them. But ultimately, like everything else, even the breath within my chest that was once entrusted to me as a loan for safe-keeping will be taken back. None of it belongs to me, none of this stuff belongs to us. Ultimately, I just need to loosen my grip on all of it because they are not truly mine to hold to. They belong to Him and He will decide when they return and when they stay.

And I think that that's what Rav Kook was teaching. That true freedom, true liberty is internalizing that truth and recognizing that our mission is to be faithful and loyal stewards of all that is His and to focus on our job which is to elevate the sparks of godliness and light within all that He's entrusted us with.

And that's why it's so meaningful to me that we're learning exactly this Torah portion, as we enter Yom Yerushalayim. Because just as the Sabbatical year helps remind us of our deepest mission to the Land, I believe that Jerusalem reminds us of our mission to the world. The national anthem of the State of Israel, as beautiful as it is, doesn't convey the deepest of all truths. It says that we are here to be a free people in our Land. But the word for free used there is *chofshi*, like free from jail. Or encumbered from the subjugation and enslavement of the nations.

But that is not what this is all about. That is not why God is ingathering us from the exiles and returning us to Zion. We are not here to simply be free from the enslavement to the nations and to do whatever we want to do. That type of wording sort of elicits in my mind imagery of the golden calf in which we are free to do whatever we want and to follow whatever base impulses we desire. That is not why we are here. Why are we here? Well the Torah answers it in this Torah portion. The Torah tells us very clearly in this portion when teaching what will happen in the Jubilee year when it speaks of freeing the slaves. It says:



Then they, along with any children, shall be free of your authority; they shall go back to their family and return to the ancestral holding.— For they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt; they may not give themselves over into servitude.

*-Leviticus 25:38-39*

Verse 39 goes on to say that we are His servants. We are God's servants, we are not here to HAVE servants, but we are here to BE servants, servants of the El Elyon, servants of the God of the Most High. Is there any honor or privilege, any purpose or mission that is greater and more lofty than that? Some people don't like the sound of that, "What I'm a servant to God? I'm His slave?" "Yes! What greater in the world? We're going to be servants to someone. We're going to be slaves to something in this world. Will it be the Creator of Heaven and Earth, our Father in Heaven, or is it going to be whatever impulse we want to do at that very moment?"

You know to me, that is what Jerusalem represents. It represents the "why" of Israel. But I won't try to describe it myself. You know the prophets of Israel are much more eloquent than I could ever be. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed:



And it shall come to pass in the end of days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on top of the mountains... And many peoples shall go and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

-Isaiah 2:2-3

You know it doesn't matter to me how many times I read these prophecies, because it's just words. Words are words. Every time it pierces my soul, every time it fills me with light and with hope. I can read it a thousand times and it continues to do that for me.

You know the prophet Jeremiah teaches that Jerusalem will become the universal seat of Divine Kingship.

At that time they shall call Jerusalem 'The Throne of the Lord,' and all nations shall gather to it, to the name of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no longer walk after the stubbornness of their evil hearts.

-Jeremiah 3:17

Or as King David declares in Psalms that Jerusalem would be the center of unity, wholeness, and peace. He said in chapter 122:

Our feet stood within your gates, O Jerusalem—Jerusalem, built as a city bound firmly together... Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: may those who love you be secure. Peace be within your walls, and security within your palaces.

-Psalms 122:2-3, 6-7

I share these with you, not the ones you had, I share these with you because when God speaks of Jerusalem, the prophets are not just proclaiming this to the mountains themselves, but to us, to His nation of Israel and to those who love us and stand with us. Because it's not the mountains or the bricks

or the mortar that will be this light. No, it will be us, His nation who dwell within it. When we plant our roots in the holy city and we follow His edicts and His commandments, then the light of Jerusalem will shine to all of mankind.

And so, my dear brothers and sisters, as we stand at this intersection of Torah portions, of history, of prophecy between Behar and Bechukotai and Yom Yerushalyim, we're being invited to step into something larger than ourselves. These are not just readings or commemorations, this is our calling. We are being called to live lives of sacred stewardship. You know a lot of you

actually taught me these words. I don't think before meeting and speaking with you, I knew the word, stewardship. But there's no better word for it. We're stewards of our Land and our people and our families and our faith. We're being called to hold what we've been given with love and reverence and humility, knowing that all of it is His.

And yes, we are surrounded by challenge, we're surrounded by hatred and threats and fires, literal and spiritual. But never forget that fire can destroy, but it can also purify. And out of the fire our nation is being refined. Out of the fire, emunah, our faith is being forged. Out of the fire, our love is growing deeper.

And out of the fire, the light of Jerusalem is rising because Jerusalem is not just a place on a map. It's the heartbeat of destiny. It's the place where heaven kisses earth. Yerushalyim, it ends in y'im because when it's plural it ends in im, but only if it's got a pair, a dual, it ends in y'im. And it ends in Yerushalyim because there's Yerushalyim shel malah and mata. The Jerusalem of the spiritual and physical worlds connect in Jerusalem. It's the throne of HaShem in the world. And it's the center from which His word and His light will illuminate all of creation.

And so, here we are. We're alive in this time, chosen to be a part of this unfolding story. So let us choose to live with eyes wide open and hearts fully engaged, fully engaged. Sometimes I think we have these calluses around our hearts, we're so afraid of losing everything, of being hurt. That also prevents us from really experiencing and feeling. But when we understand that it's not ours, that it's all within His Hands, we can really let go and experience life fully engaged.

Let us not merely celebrate Jerusalem, because tonight that's what it is. It's Yom Yerushalyim. Let us become Jerusalem, a city of peace and a beacon of truth, and a vessel of light. May we merit to see with our own eyes the full redemption of Jerusalem. May the tears of this long exile be turned into tears of joy and return. And may the light of this Fellowship, of your hearts and of our faith together help ignite the dawn that we've been waiting for. May it come soon and may it come swiftly, and may we all be worthy to play our part. Amen.

And with that, let me turn over the Fellowship to Tehila and Jeremy, first Tehila. They will undoubtedly uplift and inspire us the way that only they uniquely do it. I'm eager to hear Tehila because she sat at our Shabbat table and started sharing a beautiful teaching. And you now her style. She starts with barraging with some excellent questions that you didn't even know that you had. But once you hear them, you simply can't go on with life until you get the answers. And anyways, she sat at the table, she presented the questions, then we washed our hands for the bread to begin the meal, after which she would share the answers. And those of you who have been to a Shabbat meal, you know you don't speak between washing your hands and

eating the bread. Well when I first took the bite of the bread, an unbelievable wave of excruciating pain shot through my tooth, nearly knocking me out. My kids were terrified. Everyone thought it was just me being crazy and pulling shtick. Well we never got to hear the answer. That little spectacle of my agony threw off the whole thing. So I'm hoping that she will share the answer, I can finally hear the answer and my soul can be at peace. All right, I love you, my friends, they will share the final blessing, I won't do it now. I wanted to do a Fellowship Connection and connect with all of you, but I need to get going to this exercise right now. So, here is Tehila:

Tehila

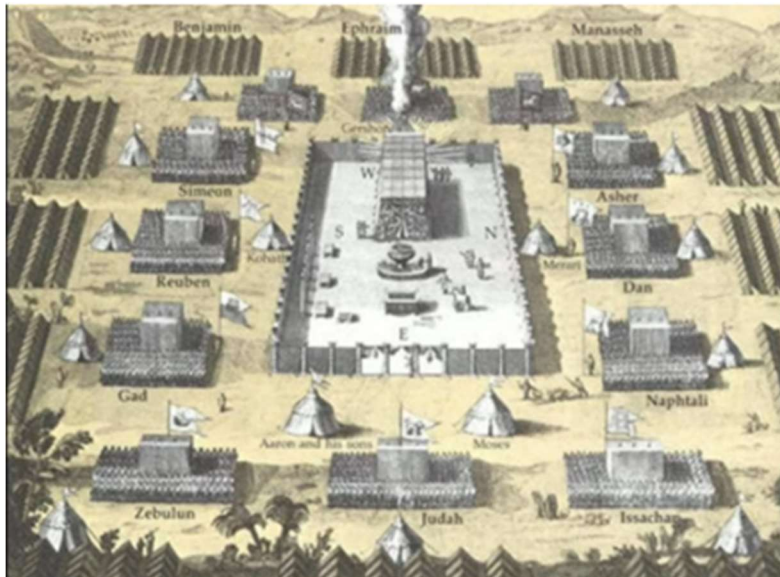
Hi everybody, so great to see all of you. Wow, ok, first of all, Ari, thank you so much. I feel like that Torah that you just shared spoke directly to me. And yes, at our Shabbat meal I was going to try to share a little bit of Torah. Ari fails to mention that at the beginning of me trying to teach the Torah, he put a fake tongue in his mouth and then pretended to be cutting his fake tongue in order to freak everybody out, putting on this rubber tongue, which was of course very conducive to me giving over my Torah idea. And only then did he bite into the bread and start screaming in excruciating pain which everyone thought was a continuation the tongue joke in one way or another. And so, we all start laughing and poor Ari is like doubled over in pain and screaming, but that's kind of what he had been doing even before that with his fake tongue. So it was very confusing to everyone. It took quite awhile for us to realize that Ari was indeed in pain, at which point we of course felt very bad for him and only laughed a little bit at the absurdity of the situation. But mostly felt really bad.

Ok, guys, this week's coming portion is Bemidbar, Numbers, the first portion in the book of Bemidbar, Numbers. Now this portion poses a challenge because you guys know I love teaching about the portion. On the other hand, we have Jerusalem Day now. And on the third hand, we have Shavuot coming up and we're not going to get to meet because that comes out on Sunday night, next week. And let's be honest. Bemidbar, this first portion of Numbers doesn't seem at first glance to have a lot of story to it. It's mostly counting and numbers, it kind of reminds me of a meeting of like the city planning council about how to plan out a suburb. Ok, this tribe's going to sit over here and this tribe is going to sit over here. We have this many people here and this many people there. It doesn't really lend itself to much story telling at first glance. So I felt like I really had my work cut out for me. But, the Torah does not disappoint us. And so, I will try to touch on all of these coming out of our portion. Let's see if I can do it. So buckle up, guys.

Ok, so this week's portion, we are in the second year. The Tabernacle has been made and now, seemingly, it's time to get organized as an encampment. Now, it would look like from reading

the Torah that up until now we just have a giant blob of people. There seems to be a giant blob moving through the sea when the sea splits. And then just a very big blob of people when they're at Mt. Sinai. We don't really hear about any great amount of order in the living arrangements. So this portion is all about how everyone situates themselves.

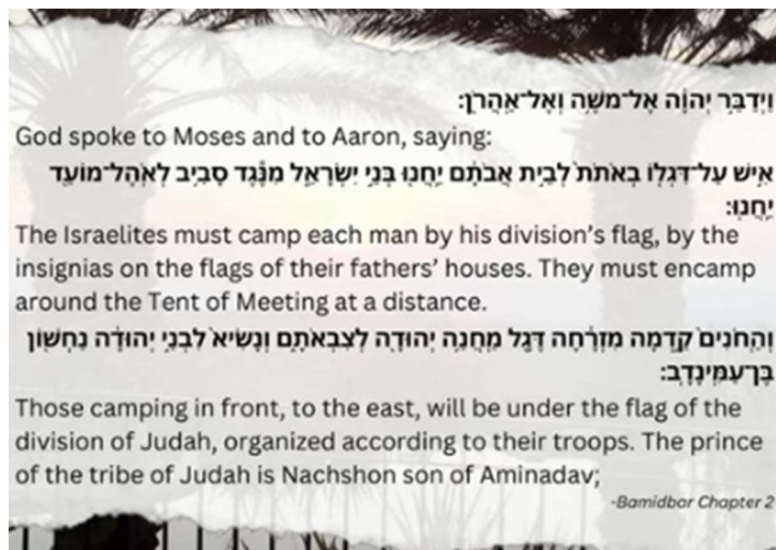
Now the first thing that we notice is that the Tabernacle isn't exactly where you would necessarily expect it. We're talking about a travelling group of people. If you were to imagine what it would be and you hadn't read the Torah, where would you sort of imagine the Tabernacle? I would imagine the Tabernacle like up ahead, and then the priests, and then the Levites, and then the more important tribes, and maybe the less significant tribes. I would kind of have a progression going behind it because that's how they travel. We always have the Tabernacles and its articles up front when we're traveling, so when we settle down you would just think we would settle like that. That would kind of be pointing us in the right direction.



But in fact, we get a square encampment with these four flanks of three tribes on each side. And then, each tribe...so you have these groups of three and then it says that each tribe dwells within itself. So you can kind of look here at an example of a picture. You can see like tribe, tribe, tribe on each side. And then it says that within each tribe, you have each family unto their father's house, dwelling sort

of like a miniature encampment within each encampment. So that's interesting.

Now what's also interesting is the tremendous focus that we get in this portion on flags. It's not not odd right. This is one example. There are so many times that this portion mentions flags. In chapter two, verse 1:



And it goes on again and again telling us that there are going to be these flags or banners that keep repeating themselves. Like it's really important that each group has a flag. Why is that important? Now, it almost seems like...when you think about it, is it color war? Is it capture the flag? The whole idea of flags is sort of interesting.

You know I was reading in one of the classical interpreters of the Torah, the Chizkuni says that from these verses in this Torah portion, the nations of the world began making flags. Nations began identifying themselves with flags.

And I read that and I was like...hmmm...that might need a fact check. But I did fact check it and lo and behold if you look up in Wikipedia or in Encyclopedia Britannica, they'll all say that flags were invented in China in the 11<sup>th</sup> century BCE. But the Torah here is telling us the story that takes place hundreds of years before that. So it would seem that the biblical flags are indeed the first flags known in history. What does that mean?

And there's so much talk about the flags. You have the main flag of each group of three. So let's say if you're in the Judah team and you have the Judah flag, and if you're in the Reuven team you have the Reuven flag... For like three tribes, three tribes, three on each side. And then within each flag, it seems that the Torah is telling us that each tribe has a flag, maybe even each family has a flag. What's up with all the flags?

So there's this really interesting, kind of odd...I don't want to say odd, kind of surprising, unusual Midrash. And the Midrash actually connects these flags to the revelation at Sinai. Listen to this Midrash. It says in the Midrash of the Bemidbar Rabbah:

"A great love did Hashem show them (Israel), by making them into camps with flags."  
When Hashem revealed Himself at Har Sinai, He descended with 220,000 angels, as it says (Tehillim 68:18),  
"The chariots of God are myriads upon myriads, thousands of thousands."  
All of them were arranged in groups with flags, as it says (Shir HaShirim 5:10),  
"Bannered among ten thousand (דגול מרבבה)."

When Bnei Yisrael saw the angels arranged with flags and banners, they began to desire flags for themselves, and said:  
"Would that we, too, could be arranged with flags like them!"

Hashem said to them:  
"You desire to have flags? I swear, I will fulfill your desire,"  
as it says (Tehillim 20:5),  
"May Hashem fulfill all your desires."

Immediately, Hashem informed Moshe and said to him:  
"Go and make them flags, as they have desired."

*-Bamidbar Rabbah, chapter 2*

It's a sign of HaShem's love for us that He gave us flags? When the children of Israel saw the angels arranged with flags, they began to desire flags for themselves. Doesn't that happen to you guys on a day to day basis? You run into some angels and the angel is waving a flag and you say, "If only I had...like the first thought that comes to mind is like, 'gee, I really need a flag, I really need a flag like that angel.'"

So for some reason, the Midrash is connecting this arrangement of flags with the revelation at Sinai and the angels that were accompanying God's entourage as He revealed Himself in the world. So, let's think about that for a second. Let's unpack it. When HaShem reveals Himself, He has this entourage. We see this in many places. There's an entourage of angels that come and now the Midrash tells us that they are carrying flags.

Well, what are angels? How are angels different from human beings? Besides for not having physical bodies. Now what's interesting, in Hebrew, the word for angel, malak, and the word for messenger are the same word. Even if when our patriarchs sent out messengers, often it will describe the messengers as angels, even though they're just regular people being sent on a mission. So to be an angel, fundamentally, is to be single-minded in the mission God gave you. Us as humans, we get distracted. I want to serve God, but on the other hand I want to serve me and my physical desires, like what's going to be my main thing? I'm pulled in this direction, I'm pulled in that direction. The angels don't struggle with that.



The flags symbolize that. They come into the world at the revelation and each one of them has a flag. What is a flag? A flag is like something that you rally around. When you're lost, you look up and you see this flag and you know what direction you're going in. It identifies you. It ensures that you don't get lost. You look where your flag is and you know where you need to go. It's like each angel knew their precise place and their precise direction and their job.

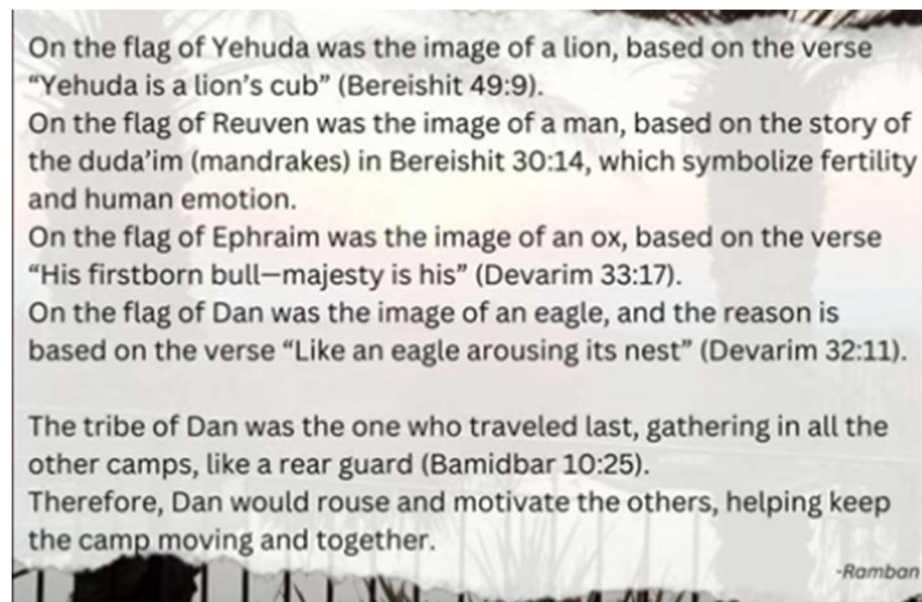
And Israel is banned of freely released slaves, sees these angels and is so inspired. It's like the inner calling of us at the revelation. It's like we have an inner desire to be closer to that angelic state where you can actually know your purpose. Why did HaShem send me to this world? It's like metaphorically they were saying, "We want flags, too. HaShem, show us our mission in life. We want to also be like angels. We want to be single-minded in focusing on doing Your will." It's this beautiful kind of mission-driven, God-centered life that we want to have. And that's something that they realize at Sinai. That's like the...besides for receiving the Torah, they didn't only receive laws and words, but they had an experience of seeing what they could strive to be like.

And so, essentially this encampment that's being created in our portion, you know, it's interesting that this portion of this week is always the portion that you read right before Shavuot. It's like there's some kind of connection. This encampment, it seems when you first read it, it's so technical. But actually, it's an embodiment of the Sinai experience. And that helps us really understand the whole structure of the encampment. Because the center of the encampment is the Tabernacle. In the center of the Tabernacle are the tablets inside the ark. And above them are the cherubs where we have ongoing revelation. And so you have the revelation of Sinai and the ongoing relationship that makes itself manifest through the cherubs. We have this kind of mobile Mt. Sinai. That's really what the Tabernacle is.

And the people are essentially organizing their lives around the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle is not in front where it's like, "Ok, I have this on one side of me, but I have also all my other inclinations on my other side. Maybe I could move backwards, forwards, sideways. Everyone is facing inwards towards the Tabernacle. It's not one part of our life. It's not in one direction of our life. We all want to be like angels. Their inner desire was to be like angels looking single-mindedly towards this center to focus their life on HaShem's commandments and His ongoing revelation.

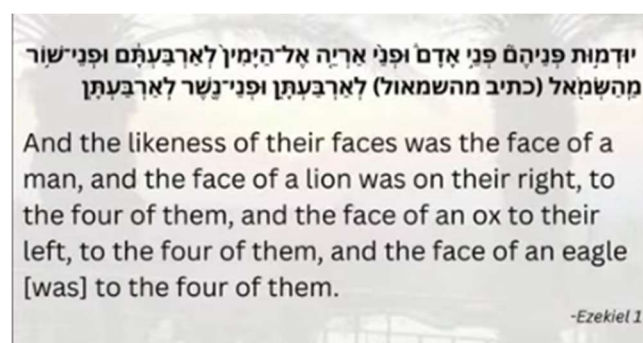
So now, what did these flags actually look like? The Torah says that there were flags and on each flag there was a symbol. But the Torah doesn't tell us what the symbol was. Seemingly whichever tribe was the dominant tribe of that trinity, would probably have some kind of symbol relating to them, but it doesn't tell us what it is. But here's the thing. Our forefathers

were actually there. And that's the power of the Oral tradition. Like my grandfather's grandfather's grandfather's grandfather was actually there and saw those flags. Like do we believe that? That actually happened. These stories were passed down to us. And we have a tradition going back countless generations of what the actual symbols were on the flags. You can see it in many sources, but I'll give you one example that was just worded really clearly and known in Hebrew as the Ramban. So he says:



So on the Judah side, the Judah team, where He has Judah, Yissachar, and Zevulun, they had the lion flag. In Hebrew, the word for mandrakes, duda'im is the same letters as the letters of the word, Adam, man.

Ok, so that's interesting. We have this ancient, ancient tradition telling us what the flags look like. Do these symbols sound familiar? Are they ringing a bell to anybody? I'm going to see all the chat popping up, right? In the vision of Ezekiel, of Yechezkel, in the first chapter, he sees the heavenly entourage, the carriage, the throne of God. And what does it say?



So you have these like the throne of God with these four faces. Seemingly, we know at the revelation, everyone who was at Mt. Sinai saw this complete revelation just like Ezekiel saw. So when they're making their flags, they know what they've seen. I won't go into all the details in Hebrew, but you can



take my word that many of the phrases described in Ezekiel's vision are also used here describing the structuring of the camp.

So, if we put everything together, this encampment is not just like a suburban planning meeting. This is essentially an earthly physical replication of the heavenly throne and chariot. When the people say, "We want flags," maybe they're not just saying we want to be angel-like in our personalities. Maybe they're actually saying, "We want the whole kit and kaboodle. We actually want to create a dwelling place on earth for HaShem that is like His dwelling place in heaven. We want to organize our entire lives such that we ourselves become the bearers of HaShem's Presence.

We have this replica with these flags, but the flags representing the essence of what we are trying to be. We are trying with our lives, with our tents, with our homes, with our families, to actually live in such a way that we can be a bearer, a chariot for the throne of HaShem, which is symbolized in the Tabernacle as the location of HaShem's Presence as it can be revealed in this actual physical world.

And it's really beautiful when you think about the implications. Because here they are in this chaotic world symbolized by the desert. The desert is a place where there's no order. You have Amalek trying to kill you and Midian trying to tempt you and Balaam trying to curse you. That's no different from the world that we live in maybe. And with all that chaos, within all that chaos, the Torah is telling us you can actually organize yourself, your life, your family, your community in such a way that invites HaShem's Presence into your midst. It seems to be a recipe to organizing yourself as a person with a mission that's located within a family. A family within the context of a larger family. A larger family in the context of a community. And that community in the context of a greater national commitment that decides to center and orient itself with HaShem and HaShem's commandments and Presence at the center of the center.

And you know, I promised you something cool for Jerusalem Day. And you're saying, "Well, I don't know." Ok, listen to this. Jerusalem Day is a tricky holiday. Because you know, in Israel everyone celebrates Independence Day. But somehow the Six-Day War got kind of forgotten, marginalized primarily because of the ongoing argument between the left and the right, that also kind of breaks down on lines of religious and non-religious people as to what should really be the status of Judea and Samaria and ultimately the Temple Mount. And because it's such a, let's say controversial issue, I hope less so now since the beginning of the war, but who knows...Jerusalem Day doesn't get all of the hype that, let's say Independence Day gets. And so, even though we're celebrating the redemption of Jerusalem and the holy places in the biblical heartland, the celebrations became mostly relegated to religious Zionists and not so much in

the secular world and definitely not in the world of the Israeli left who actually strove to give those places to the Arabs. So it never really developed any major traditions.

There's really only one tradition that is consistently celebrated on Jerusalem Day. And that is the flag march. Now I don't think that when anyone started out marching with a flag and like kind of picked up grassroots, like you know more and more people joined. I don't think anybody thought that that would even become the main event of the day. And I for sure don't think that they thought about the portion of Bemidbar and the flags in the encampment that comes out every year on the week of Jerusalem Day, but here we are.



And in the very portion of Bemidbar that focuses so much on these flags, we have the flag march where thousands and thousands of people come and take Israeli flags and march around the Old City, ending up ultimately at the Western Wall facing the Temple Mount.

It's like almost unknowingly, but through some kind of prophetic intuition even, we were channeling this idea that says our flag orients us to our purpose. And with our flags, we organize ourselves around HaShem's revelation which is ultimately going to be in the center of the Old City of Jerusalem at the Temple Mount. And so, in this kind of grassroots intuition, exactly in this week's portion, we're going to see tomorrow thousands and thousands of young people circling the Old City and coming to face physically and spiritually the Temple Mount and say, "This is our flag and this is what we want to orient our lives to. This is what we want to dedicate ourselves to."

So with that, I wish you guys a happy Jerusalem Day. I wish you a meaningful Shavuot and that may you just connect...that we should all connect with our mission, our flag nestled within our families, within the communities that we build and facing our hearts fully and completely to orient ourselves towards the Tabernacle, towards the Ark of the Covenant and ultimately towards the Temple that should be rebuilt in our days. Amen.

Jeremy

Wow, is she unbelievable guys? Hold on, just one second.

Tehila

I forgot it was my job to introduce my wonderful, incredible, inspiring, and not too bad looking husband. You guys should enjoy.

Jeremy

All right, thank you very much. Anyways, I didn't get a chance to learn with Tehila over Shabbat, but she's like, "Oh my goodness, I am going to give such a beautiful Torah for the Fellowship. The flags, Jerusalem Day, she's going to tie it all together. That the Jewish people are the throne of God in this world. We are the Merkava, we are the chariot, that we carry God's Presence through the desert into the Land of Israel. And that's just remarkable."

And so, I want to add just one more dimension to Jerusalem Day because we're literally starting Jerusalem Day tonight. And the proximity of Jerusalem Day to Shavuot is not just a coincidence on the calendar. It's a deep spiritual alignment that reflects the essence of biblical destiny. Yom Yerushalyim commemorates the miraculous reunification of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War. It's a modern-day celebration of tshuva. That's the truth. It's the return to the heart of our people, to the center of every Jewish prayer. It's a return to ourselves, it's a return to our focus, to our flag.

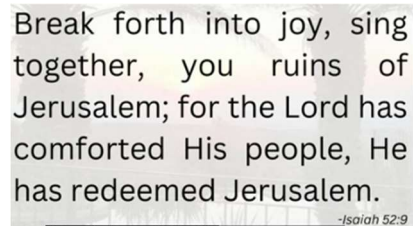
And just a few days later, on Shavuot, we celebrate the giving of the Torah at Sinai. The moment when HaShem entered into a covenant with the people of Israel and gave us our eternal mission. And that connection is profound. Shavuot gave us our purpose and Jerusalem gave us our place. At Sinai, the Jewish people became a nation of the spirit and a representation of HaShem's ways on earth.

But that covenant was never meant to stay in the desert. It was always meant to find a home in Zion and to be lived out in a Land and a city chosen for its holiness. And now, we actually fuse the two together. The Torah and Jerusalem are intertwined. The spiritual content and the sacred vessel. Just as Shavuot is the anniversary of our national soul, Jerusalem is the embodiment of that soul in place, in space. When those two come together, spiritual and physical, we actually express God is one. HaShem echad. That's the essence of Jewish destiny. The purpose of redemption, of Mashiach.

And now, in the midst of this seemingly endless war, I want to put things into a prophet perspective. Because although the last year and a half have been so hard and so challenging, a year and a half in the scope of all of biblical history is really a blink of an eye. And so, we need to always look at reality with Mashiach eyes, to always look at reality from a bird's eye view and

from the perspective of all of Jewish history and make sure we don't lose the forest because we're staring at the trees in front of us.

And Rav Shlomo Goren, he was the first chief rabbi of the IDF. And when he arrived at the Western Wall and began to pray, he stayed there for many hours. And he quoted Isaiah 52, verse 9:



Break forth into joy, sing together, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem.

-Isaiah 52:9

On the Six-Day War, as the Temple Mount was being liberated, they all went to the Western Wall and immediately Rav Goren was saying this is the prophecy that we've been waiting for.

Every day Jerusalem Day is that reminder. And the fact that it hasn't become mainstream is just an opportunity for every believer to really stake his claim. The Six-Day War stands as one of the clearest signs in modern time that Israel's survival and flourishing is not random. They are rooted in covenant. They're fueled by faith. And they should stir every lover of Israel to remember – we are the living pages of the continuing biblical story of Israel.

And it's not enough to admire the miracles of the past. We are being called to live with that clarity and courage and conviction today. To love Israel is to stand with Israel, to pray for Jerusalem and for her peace and for her completeness, defend her truth and to participate in her unfolding destiny. And recognizing that Jerusalem Day and Shavuot, in their inextricable connection, we are all on one path. From the exodus from Egypt, until Shavuot, going through Independence Day and Jerusalem Day. It's all a part of the same process.

And with that, I want us all to know that everyone in the Land of Israel Fellowship is a part of that process. All of us, chapter 8 in the book of Zechariah is probably the greatest chapter of the liberation of Jerusalem. And after we liberate Jerusalem, it ends that from that the righteous among the nations, ten men from every language of the nations will grab hold of the corner of the garment of a Judean man and say, "Take us with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

Jerusalem Day is the spark, it's what clicks, it's what everyone is watching saying, "Oh my goodness, the Jews are back in Jerusalem and Jerusalem is being built and it's bigger than it's ever been in all of Jerusalem's history. And the Jewish people are sovereign in the Land of Israel with Jerusalem as its capital. If God is with the Jews, I'm with the Jews. If God is with Israel, I'm with Israel."

And that's really what we celebrate tonight at Jerusalem Day. Knowing that we are the chariot of God in the world. That we represent His truth, that Jerusalem will be a city of truth for the world to recognize. And with that, I want to bless you all with a Aaronic blessing from this place, from Judea that was liberated in the Six-Day War. And may we soon see the kingdom established with Jerusalem as its capital. And may all of you be blessed from this place.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

Shalom my friends, have a beautiful Jerusalem's Day, we will see you again soon. Shalom!