

Session 233  
Balak – The Final Obstacles to Redemption  
Beyond the Curse of War into the Blessing of Israel  
13 July 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQan9L3yXjc&t=238s>

Jeremy

Ok, now we have it! Ok, wow, there's like always challenges, always challenges. It must be because we have a giant, important mission with this Fellowship. And I'm just scrolling through all of the beautiful faces here. And it's just so wonderful to see all of you here. Rodrigo, thank you for tuning in live as you're driving. Ed and Julie, shalom; Harald and Brigitte, thank you for tuning in from Germany. It's just wonderful to see all of your faces. I just love this Fellowship. I don't know where Wes went, but Lisa, it's great to see you guys all the way from Montana, good to see you in virtual and in the real and then back in virtual. And we're just on such a journey together. Watching that slide show, it's like a rollercoaster of emotions – of sadness and joy and hope and inspiration and awe and wonder and the miracles of it all.

And this is by far, in my life experience, the most intense time in Israel's history. And today is a really special time together. It's the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, a fast day, so it's almost toward the end of the fast here in Israel. I haven't drunk any water, I haven't eaten any food, and it's a fast day that we remember Jerusalem and we remember the destruction of the Temple. The 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz is a fast day on the Hebrew calendar that marks the beginning of the three-week mourning period leading up to Tisha b'av, the saddest day in Jewish history, when both Temples were destroyed. And the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz commemorates the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem by the Romans before the destruction of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple in the year 70.

And it's 2025, and it's just amazing and remarkable to think that the Jewish people have fasted for 1,955 years, century after century, generation after generation, remembering and mourning over Jerusalem. And our Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed and we felt the pain when we were in the exile. And now, we're back in the Land and we still feel the pain of losing our dream, but it feels like now every fast is really one step closer to fulfilling that dream. There's a Jewish tradition that Mashiach is going to be born or brought into the world or revealed on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av. That in that place of destruction, the seeds of redemption were already planted.

And today is a unique day because sometimes you see that there are days in the year, they have a certain spiritual energy to them. And according to the Jewish tradition, there's five tragic events that happened on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, today. The first is the first set of tablets that Moses brought down were shattered when he saw the sin of the golden calf. And that's kind of

interesting because those tablets looked a little bit like bricks to a wall. And as they were shattered, that was also the beginning, but it was also a place of Yom Kippur and redemption and a second set of tablets.

The 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, also the daily Tamid offering was stopped, the daily sacrifice in the Temple, because of the siege, we ran out of sheep and that was the beginning of the end of the Temple service. Of course, the walls were breached and an idol was actually placed in the Temple, defiling it.

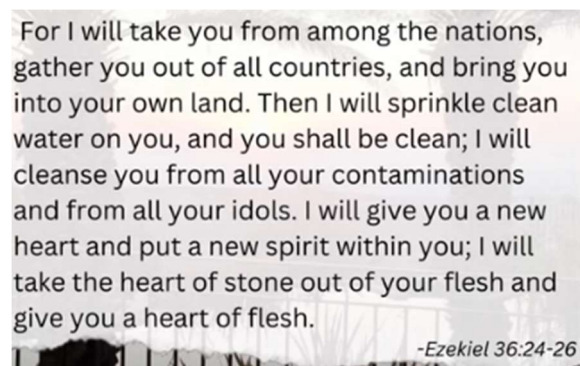
And so the times we're living in, it feels like the walls are coming down. And the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz is remembered as a national tragedy. It's the beginning of the destruction. But in life, when the walls come down, that fall isn't always a sign of defeat. Sometimes, the falling of walls at the very beginning of healing. And in some ways, there was so much baseless hatred in the times of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple, that we could not get along. The society just needed a redo and the destruction was in order to rebuild.

And we all build walls. Walls around our hearts, around our emotions, our fears. We put them up to protect ourselves from pain, from disappointment, vulnerability, fears. But a lot of times, the same walls that protect us, they really imprison us. They keep us locked in, they keep us from reaching out to others, of really connecting deeply with other people, or for even allowing God to enter in because our walls are so fortified. But when those walls begin to crack, maybe because we lost something or someone, the change, the struggle, the spiritual awakening, it can feel frightening, like something is collapsing. But perhaps, those moments are not destruction. They are Divine intervention, a clearing, a preparation for something new. And the breach may hurt, but it may also allow the light in. And when the walls come down, we finally begin to see, to feel, to rebuild, not just what was, but rebuild something eternal that can be born.

And this week, at the Farm, we had a group of wives from Steboaz. They came to the Farm for a day and for a night and for a morning. And Steboaz is a little village here in Judea. And maybe about 20 minutes away from the Farm. And this was a group of wives whose husbands have been serving in reserve duty. And some of these wives have husbands who have been in Gaza for 500 days. And my partner, Roni, who really coordinated that group told me that he saw these women, mostly young married couples with little kids, and they are just wrung out. Just exhausted from the war, living with the constant anxiety and fear. Taking care of their children all by themselves, trying to keep the house afloat. And the day on the Farm was so healing and rejuvenating.

And this has been the longest war that I remember, maybe the longest war in all of Israel's history. And then, in the middle, there was another war with Iran. There was a war within a war, and just everyone in Israel right now feels it. And statistics came out saying that 35% of the soldiers who have fallen during the war are from Judea and Samaria, while settlers in Judea and Samaria only constitute about 5% of the general population. So, in Judea and Samaria, every village feels it, arguably more than anywhere else in Israel. Somehow, Judea and Samaria, even though there's a war in Gaza and in Lebanon and Syria, Judea and Samaria remain on the front lines of the battle for the Land of Israel.

And it never dawned on me before, but I had a new understanding on the Messianic prophecy in the book of Ezekiel in chapter 36, verse 24 into 26. And here's what it says:



For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your contaminations and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

-Ezekiel 36:24-26

Now what that Messianic prophecy is saying is that when the people of Israel return to the Land of Israel, they are going to need to be cleansed, they're not going to be religious, they're not going to be spiritual, they're going to need a new spirit, they're going to have a heart of stone. And that heart of stone is going to need to be replaced.

And right now, it feels like Israel is like on the operating table. We're in the middle of open-heart surgery, right now. Our heart of stone is being taken out and it's being replaced with a new heart. It's painful, it's hard, we will have to recover, it's going to take time. But the walls we built are coming down. And Israel is being prepared for a new day. That's really how I see the time that we're living in now.

I read an article in Ynet, which is one of Israel's top internet news websites. It says that 69% of Israelis claim that they are talking to God now more since the war. Sixty-nine percent. And that's a mainstream, secular news outlet. So who knows what's really happening, but something is shaking inside the Land of Israel. People's hearts are being changed.

And so with that, I want us to take a chance and unite together and I was looking at all the chats – people from Germany and Holland and Cape Town in Africa and Asia and all across North America, Mexico. And what an opportunity to bring literally, representatives from so many nations, from the whole world together to kick off a prayer for our Fellowship.

HaShem, Master of the Universe, we come before You today on this solemn day, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, the day the walls of Jerusalem were breached. It was the beginning of heartbreak, of exile and destruction. But now, so many centuries later, we have returned to the Land of Israel and we gather together in this Fellowship with Jerusalem in our minds and in our hearts. We dedicate this time to You, we dedicate this gathering to Your city, Jerusalem, to Your Temple, and to Your throne on earth. May You be the King of our lives.

HaShem, You have carried us through 600 days of war, 600 and almost 50 now. We are tired, we are tested, but we are unbroken. But we need You now more than ever. We cry out for supernatural strength. We ask You to hold us up, to breathe life into us again. Let this long struggle be a process of purification, of rebirth, where You remove from us hearts of stones and bless us with new hearts of flesh. Let these broken walls in our history and in our lives not be signs of defeat, but openings for transformation. Let them be cracks through which Your light enters, may this time be the beginning of our redemption and may this Fellowship be our prayer in action, a small flame joining the eternal fire of Yerushalyim. We are scattered across the world, but we are united in purpose to see Jerusalem rebuilt in truth and justice, to see it shine as a beacon on the mountain, calling all of your children to come home to You. May this Fellowship be a seed of prophecy that Jerusalem will indeed become a House of Prayer for all Nations.

Bless every soul in this Fellowship, bless their families, bless all of Israel with protection, clarity, and the courage to keep going. And above all, may we live to see Your Name sanctified in the eyes of the entire world and may we play our part in that process from Jerusalem, from the city of truth. Amen.

All right, my friends, you know when you're a part of the Fellowship, you can really feel the difference of this week's Torah portion, Balak. It's the difference we're seeing things from the outside and from the inside. And when you're a part of The Land of Israel Fellowship, something special happens when you open the Torah each week, it's not just learning, it's living the journey of Israel. And no where do we see that in more of a profound way than in this week's Torah portion. Cause every other week, the Torah places us inside the camp of Israel. It's like we're passengers in the family car on a long, winding road, on a road trip through the wilderness of history.

And like all families on a road trip, it's pretty messy. The kids are squabbling in the back seat – he touched me, she's breathing on me, the father turns around trying to restore order. And throughout the journey, everyone that's learning the Torah, they are there for it, all of it. The Torah invites us into that dynamic, into the tension, into the growth, into the raw truth, into

what it means to be a covenantal people. It's not sugar-coated, we see the complaints, the stumbles, the challenges, the sins. And we're given an inside look into our people in process.

But this week is really different. This week the Torah steps outside the camp. We're no longer in the back seat with kids. We're no longer hearing the story from within. For the first time, we hear the story from the outside. From the vantage point of our enemies, our neighbors, our observers. And remarkably, instead of criticism, we hear something else. We hear blessing. In Parashat Balak, God allows us a glimpse into how He sees us. Through the unlikely mouth of Bilam, we hear HaShem's Voice declaring His love, His protection, and His eternal purpose for Israel. We hear the world's attempt to curse us turned into words of praise, and we see that while we may struggle from within, God sees something far more beautiful. And it's remarkable. And of course, there's so much to learn from this perspective parsha. But first, I want to invite Ari to join us, to share his thoughts on the Torah with us as we kick off this Fellowship. Ari, are you here?

Ari

I am here, can you hear me? Yes, good, good, good, ok. I've got the new camera, the new mike, everything is set up, Tabitha and I did a dry run very exciting, very exciting. And I started with my microphone on, Jeremy, isn't that exciting, too? And we thought maybe, hopefully we could sort of spar a little bit. It's good to see everybody, it's good to see all of you.

So one of the themes we've been exploring together is the incredible spiritual power of our prayers. And the strength of every single word that we utter. And sometimes I get into these things and it could be three weeks, it could be a month, it could be two months, I'm just hyper-focusing on that and I feel like we are in the times of prayer. I keep telling Jeremy on so many different fronts. You know when you go to get a car wash and the wheels get into the groove and it says, "Put it on neutral," it's like out of your hands now. That's sort of how things feel for me right now. And all we really have to do to contribute at this point, although it may feel like we have a lot that we can do, really the most powerful contribution is our prayer. We are in times of prayer. And every word we speak, prayer or not within prayer, every word we speak releases immense creative energy, whether we're aware of it or not.

So last week we discussed how what might appear to be a relatively minor incident, where Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it, it was in truth anything but minor. In that moment Moshe may have missed a golden opportunity to show the nation the transformative strength of prayer and the creative power, just of the spoken word. A lesson that is so profound that it might have prevented the sins that ultimately led to the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, of the Holy Temple, itself. That if he spoke to that rock instead of hitting it, the

Temple may never have been destroyed. We talked about that last week, if you weren't here, it's worth giving it a listen.

But I guess when you are a hammer, everything is a nail. Because when I was studying this week's parsha, this very lesson lept out at me again, in what felt like was the most powerful way imaginable and I truly believe that if we open our hearts right now, it can transform how we see our own challenges, our own imperfections and the way that we pray. So the portion begins with one of Israel's greatest enemies, Balak, the evil king of Moab who spent enormous resources to hire Bilam to curse the Jewish people, hoping to destroy them not through open battle, but through super-natural means. His motives were purely self-serving and malicious. He wanted Israel gone because he saw them as a threat to his power, despite Israel not attacking Moav in any way at all. Israel expressing that it didn't want to attack Moav in any way at all. There's a very pure and unadulterated desire within his heart to destroy Israel.

And yet, hidden inside this man, who dedicated himself to cursing Israel and destroying Israel, hidden within his heart is the spark of Mashiach, Himself. I believe this story has everything to teach us about the power of our own deeds, even the imperfect ones. About the hidden ripple effect of our choices, and about how if HaShem could turn even the twisted sacrifices of Balak into the spark of redemption, itself, how much more so can he transform the pure, sincere prayers and desires and deeds of everyone of us. And so that's where we're going today, my friends. So let's dive in.

Let's set the scene here. It was Balak, the King of Moav, he's standing on the edge of his land and he looks out across the wilderness and he sees Israel encamped on his borders and he panics, he panics. Which is so ironic, I have to mention it every single time that the spies came back and they said, "We're grasshoppers in their eyes, they want to crush us, they see us as nothing." And then we hear that that was actually just projection, that wasn't true at all. The nation that just emerged from Egypt, crushing powerful kings, is now moving closer and closer to Balak's territory and he's terrified and he wants to curse the nation. And therefore he reaches out to the King of Curses, the renowned, evil prophet, Bilam, who wanted to curse the Israelites as well on his own by the way. Now he didn't just want riches, esteem, and honor from Balak, I'm sure he wanted that. But even without all of that, he wanted from his own deep place of hatred for Israel to curse them.

And so Balak and Bilam are the most natural allies. Now there's a lot of things to say about all of this – how they came back, and he dreamt, and HaShem spoke to him in a dream, the talking donkey, so much of it. You know it's such a rich and a beautiful portion. But I want to jump straight ahead to Bilam's arrival on the scene. The minute he arrived, the sacrifices to HaShem

began. Sacrifices that Bilak hoped would curry favor, would curry HaShem's favor for the Moabites at the expense of His favorites, for the children of Israel. So let's look inside at chapter 22, verse 40:

Balak slaughtered cattle and sheep and sent them to Bil'am and the officers who were with him.

-Numbers 22:40

From the very beginning, Balak is offering sacrifices. Again, not to bless Israel, but to curse them. I mean in our eyes, this seems ridiculous and absurd, but in his eyes, why not? There's a God and if you offer

Him a lot of money and power, a lot of blood and sacrifices, then it's like a bribe, that was their relationship, and that's what Bilam thought and that's what Balak thought. And so the sacrifices began. And Bilam says to Balak, 23, verses 1 and 2:

And Bil'am said to Balak, 'Build for me here seven altars and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams. And Balak did as Bil'am had spoken, and Balak and Bil'am offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

-Numbers 23:1-2

Seven altars, each with a bull and a ram. That's 14 sacrifices right there. Then Bilam tries again, he changes places, thinking that perhaps from another vantage point Balak's sacrifices can successfully curse Israel. And the Torah says:

And he took him to the field of Tzofim, to the top of the mountain, and he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

-Numbers 23:14

Ok, that's another 14 sacrifices, so now we're at 28, but Bilam still can't curse Israel. So Balak tries a third location. And the Torah tells us:

And Bil'am said to Balak, 'Build for me here seven altars and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams. And Balak did as Bil'am had said, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar.

-Numbers 23:29-30

Another 14 sacrifices! That is three sets of 14 sacrifices. Just imagine the exhaustion, the blood, the animals, the altars built again and again, all in hopes of cursing Israel.

But here's the turn that really spoke to me so deeply. Even though Balak's motives were utterly evil, he wanted Israel destroyed. Now this may be hard to swallow, but this is really...even without the sages of Israel, just a very clear teaching. He wanted Israel destroyed, with all of his heart he wanted to destroy Israel. These korbonot to HaShem, HaShem would not ignore them,

He would not let them go unrewarded because of the principle in the Torah that HaShem does not let any act of service go unrewarded as the sages teach.

The Holy One, Blessed is He, does not withhold the reward of any creature.

-Nazir 23b

That's right, even someone as evil as King Balak who wanted to destroy the entire nation of Israel, God's beloved people. Even someone as evil as him who offered sacrifices to HaShem for the most sinister

and nefarious motivations. As hard as it may be for us to imagine, HaShem would not deny him reward for those sacrifices.

And now we come to one of the Torah's greatest secrets. Balak's story doesn't end in his own life time. And by the way, it didn't really begin there either. But it doesn't end in his lifetime because we learn the astonishing lineage emerging from Balak. From Balak emerged Eglon. Who remembers this? Take a second and think. Who was Eglon? I'm looking in the comments to see if anyone writes it. I'm really interested. Because at my Shabbat table, there were four girls that were in seminary, that just finished seminary, and we asked who was Eglon and no one could really remember who he was. People were like, "Oh I sort of remember." If they went to Middle School with me, they would have remembered the way my rabbi described it. But something tells me that there are many in this Fellowship, yes...yes...yes...Grant, correct. Fat King, that's right, you wanted to be the first to write it. Two big words, that is the two words. No, not the father of Ruth, but yes, exactly the King of Moab, right.

So, Eglon, he emerged. Eglon was the king of Moab, and he was an enemy of Israel during the times of the judges. Eglon was not simply a passive king, he led coalitions, he seized territory, he subjugated Israel. He was very much an enemy of the Jewish people and he oppressed the Jewish people horribly for 18 years. Then HaShem raised up a deliverer, Ehud ben Gera. Ehud, who was the...remember who Ehud was? He was the left-handed judge from the tribe of Benjamin. And his right-hand was like crippled and he was not a very scary looking man. Anyways he devised a daring plan. He made a double-edged sword and hid it under his clothes. And he went to meet Eglon to deliver him a tribute.

And Ehud said to him, 'I have a secret matter for you, O king.' And he said, 'Silence!' And all those who stood around him left.

-Judges 3:19

And then comes the verse that connects us to the story:



And Ehud came to him, and he was sitting alone in his cool upper chamber. And Ehud said, 'I have a word of God for you.' And [Eglon] stood up from his seat.

-Judges 3:20

And at that point, Ehud assassinated Eglon, which played out in such a gross way that I remember learning it in grade school as if it was yesterday. And I'm just going to tell you guys, even though I was planning on not, he was this morbidly, morbidly obese king and

when he stuck the knife into Eglon's stomach, his stomach subsumed it. And out came the fecal matter. And so Ehud ran from the room and said the king is in the restroom. And his servants waited hours and hours for him because they definitely smelled what was going on in there. And he was able to flee and leave in time.

But the point is, that Eglon following after his ancestor Balak, performed a meritorious act which just like that of Balak, would not go unrewarded. The sages teach us this in Ruth Rabbah, it's actually in numerous places, but:

Come and see how great is the power of a single righteous act done for its own sake. For if Eglon king of Moav, who did only one good deed—that he rose from his seat when Ehud said to him, 'I have a word of God for you'—merited that Ruth descended from him...

-Ruth Rabbah 2:9

Friends, think about that. Eglon, a king who oppressed Israel for 18 years, who ruled through violence and fear and murder, did one respectful act. And when he hears the words, "I have a word of God for you," he stood up. And because of that single act of kavod, of honor for God's Name, he merited that Ruth would come from his descendants, Ruth, the righteous convert?

Ruth is the very embodiment of chesed, of loving kindness. She leaves her home, her nation, her comfort, to join Israel. I always think of you as an entire Fellowship of Ruth's. On some level, one or another, I just always feel like that. She says, "Your people will be my people, your God, my God." That was Ruth. And from Ruth comes David, the sweet, singer of Israel and ultimately, Mashiach!

So Balak, who wanted nothing more than Israel's destruction, ends up being the ancestor of Israel's eternal kingship. How wild is that? Why does HaShem arrange the world like this? Why does He allow the spark of light to emerge from Moav, a nation conceived in immorality and steeped in hostility towards Israel? Where did the word Moav come from? Me'Av, from the father. When Lot's daughters seduced him in an act of incest, incest being one of the three sins that you should prefer to die than commit. One of the most egregious sins, and she named her father after that very act, Moav, from the father. Right? Which by the way, you can understand deep down her desire, her intention, both of his daughter's intentions, they thought they were

the last people on earth. They thought they were propagating all of humanity. So had holy intentions and they did the worst of things.

And then, Balak had the worst of intentions, he did the holiest of things. Why does it have to be that the world is arranged like that? Because the Torah shares a profound truth in a thousand different ways.

The highest lights fall into  
the lowest places.

-Baal Shem Tov

And then when we bring them up, when we bring them up from those low places, the light is even more beautiful than it was to begin with. Sometimes the greatest light is hidden in the deepest darkness. Sometimes it's precisely from the place that seems the most broken, the most impure. Sometimes it's from that great darkness that the seeds of redemption are planted. Moav was darkness, yet from that darkness came Ruth, from Ruth came David, and from David will come the Mashiach that we're waiting for, imminently, any moment.

So what does this mean for you and me? It means a lot to us, but one of the things that spoke the most to me is that we really need to remember that even our imperfect efforts have eternal value. It means that even when our prayers feel weak and distracted or mixed with doubt, they still rise before HaShem in ways that we can't even imagine. Because if Balak's sacrifices, brought with evil intentions could generate spiritual merit that ultimately contributed to the coming of Mashiach, how much more so are the prayers of people like you and me who are striving for holiness, striving for truth, striving to bring light to a dark world. How much more powerful are the tears that we shed for Israel, for our families, and for our healing?

Your smallest act of kindness can bring tremendous light. Your whispered prayer in the middle of the night, your effort to choose patience when you want to rage. All of it matters, none of it goes unrewarded. Sometimes we look at ourselves and we see our flaws and we see our impatience and our fears and our ego, our moments of doubt and we think, "Who am I? What difference do my actions really make?" But Balak teaches us otherwise. Because if HaShem can transform the hatred of a Moabite king into the spark of Mashiach, then He can certainly transform our sincere efforts into boundless light.

So I want to bless all of you, all of us. May HaShem bless us to see the hidden light within our own struggles and transform even our smallest deeds into sparks of redemption. May our prayers and words create ripples of goodness far beyond what we can imagine. And may we merit to witness the coming of Mashiach soon, in our days. Amen.

And friends there's one more thing I want to share with you before I turn it back over to Jeremy. We've been working on this for awhile and I'm excited that we're finally launching it now. You just got to launch it at some point. And so we're rolling out some new features on our website, including at long last, our very own store. We'll be offering beautiful items that hold special meaning for our Fellowship, and it's really a great way to further support us. Here's just a few examples.



We have great t-shirts and sweatshirts with our awesome logo. I feel like our logo is like...every time I look at our logo, it just says so much and it's so on the verge, on the cutting edge. Anyways, so we have t-shirts and sweatshirts.



We have the Mashiach patches that we've been speaking so much about. The soldiers throughout the country have been increasingly putting on their uniforms since October 7<sup>th</sup>, it really says the whole thing about what this nation is about and where we're going.



And we also have hats with our network logo, hats for the patches which is really cool because you come here to Judea on the frontlines and you go to Gaza and to Lebanon and to Syria, that's what the soldiers are wearing. It doesn't matter if the highest ranking officers have a hissy fit about it, that's what we're fighting for, that's what it's all about.



And we have a category called the artisan's collection, which is really exciting and is really beautiful. I'm the most excited about that in a lot of ways. One of the treasures in here is a series of Jerusalem stones crafted by my good friend, Yehuda Hartstark. Here's one I commissioned myself, thought I had it out here. Let me just open it and see if this is it. The one that I had commissioned, it's somewhere on my wall right now, I have it next to my bed. It's engraved with the words, "Ain Ode Milvado." There's nothing other than Him. And beneath it,

it says, "Gam zu l'tovah," this too is for the best. You know that's my thing, both of those. And so I look at those and it just reminds me. Everything is from HaShem, HaShem is everything, all of the illusions of darkness and evil, that's all from within HaShem. And I look at that and it reminds me.



Here's one, it's the Mashiach patch on Jerusalem stone.



We have this one, ki ratzu...and it's on these beautiful Jerusalem stones that you can hold up right there. And so that's really, really beautiful and we're excited about that.

Also, on our website by the way, another thing, some of you have reached out to ask about this. You'll find a link where you can support our mission of sharing the Torah being taught from Israel and bringing the Word of God from Jerusalem. Our teaching, our mission of sharing this light, if you want to support that, there is a link there to support it. As we've shared before, if you're part of the network at any level, you're doing it, you're supporting it. But some people feel moved to strengthen us further, above and beyond that and want to help us spread this light. And so, you can go to our website and click, donate, as we've shared before. Really it means everything to us.

And regarding these, I just spoke to Yehuda and he said that he's always open for people to share verses that mean something beautiful to them and we could make more and more of these. Sometimes we have a Fellowship where we have verses, "Oh, that is a powerful one." We can make a stone from that for the Fellowship. Anyways, thank you all, back to you, Jeremy.

Jeremy

All right, thank you very much, Ari. That was a brilliant teaching, and I just want to echo what you said, today we're launching the Land of Israel store, that's just really exciting for me. It's live on [www.thelandofisrael.com](http://www.thelandofisrael.com). You just have to go there and visit it. And it took a lot of work getting all the details, the shipping, the products, the making, the tracking, but we're finally

ready and it's something directly from our Fellowship to you and so many reached out and they said, "How can we be more supportive, how can we really connect?" And the store was created, exactly for that, a way to bring something tangible from our Fellowship to your home. Every item is infused with meaning, rooted in our mission, it's meant to connect you to us, us to you. And so, we're just starting and we finally built the system and now we're going to be adding more and more products in time, from Israel. But this store will be your address for products and merchandise in the Land of Israel. And thank you, Ari, for that amazing introduction.

But I want to do, is I want to take Ari's message one step forward. I mean the very man who tried to erase Israel from the map is the biological seed of the ultimate redeemer of Israel. He was the great, great, great, great grandfather of King David. The curses of Balak gave birth to the kingship of David. Out of darkness came the brightest light. That's not history, it's a template. The Torah is telling us HaShem is one, HaShem echad. There are no opposing forces battling for control. Evil is not independent. Nothing stands outside the dominion of HaShem. Ain ode milvado. There's nothing but Him. So even the darkness serves the light. Even Balak and all his wickedness was unknowingly planting the seed of redemption.

But here's the catch. Blessing is hidden, it wasn't obvious. No one at that time saw Ruth coming. No one could see King David on the horizon. Balak just looked like an enemy, like another episode of hatred and anti-Israel, anti-Semitism. And yet, with that storm, God was already at work. And that's the great truth we hold onto, especially in these times. It's the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, when the walls of Jerusalem were breached and the end was evident. And now, back in the Land, we're at war now, stretching over 600 days. We've experienced pain and heart-ache and the challenges. We've never imagined that Israel would be in the midst of such a war.

And after the rockets, the enemies, the lies, the isolation, all of it, something Divine is growing. What if in the hiddenness of this chaos, is the seed of our future? That's what this week's Torah portion is really teaching us. Our sages teach that Mashiach is brought into the world on Tisha B'av. The same day both Temples were destroyed because in the very moment of collapse, God was planting seeds of rebuilding. He doesn't patch up the broken walls, He's building up something greater than before. And that's a message we need deep in our bones right now. With our struggles, God is shaping our strength. And inside the curses there's a hidden blessing. And even as the world looks dark, God's light is moving quietly beneath the surface. That is the message of the Torah. We are going to win because God is the King. And so now, I want to introduce you to my queen, the greatest blessing of my life, to share her Torah with the Fellowship. Tehila Gimpel.

Tehila

Hey everybody, nice to see you guys. Hey. So, just a short idea about this day, this 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz. I spent a lot of time today thinking about this fast day because you know, when you can't eat, you have more time to think. It's a very long fast day because the sun goes down quite late. So I've had the whole day to be pondering this fast. And for the first time, really started to ask myself, "Why in the world do we fast on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of Tammuz?" The easy answer is, "Well, as Jeremy just said, the walls were breached."

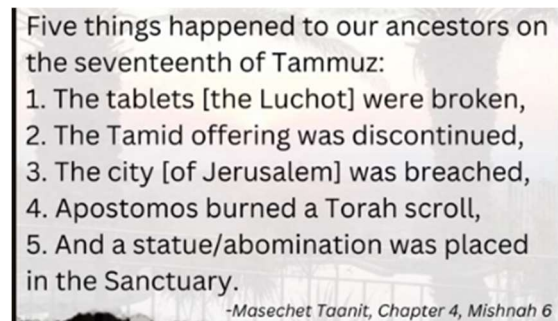
When I started to think about it, isn't it a little odd that we have so many fast days about the different stages of the destruction of the Temple? Think about a person that God forbid, died from an illness, right? Let's say, every year, on the day of their passing, we might go visit their grave, we might light a candle in their memory, or put flowers, or do something nice. But you're not going to commemorate the day that they got their diagnosis and the day that the chemo stopped working and the day that they looked really, really terrible. Like in the end of the day, a tragedy is made of a lot of small stages, but why do we need to commemorate each one? We have the 10<sup>th</sup> of Tevet where we commemorate the beginning of the siege, and then the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the breaking of the walls, and then the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av when the actual Temple was destroyed, and then we actually have Tzom Gedalia on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Tishrei, when after the destruction of the 1<sup>st</sup> Temple, there was a murder and more political unrest relating to the destruction. It seems like a lot of days, we're not like lacking in days that bad things have happened to us that we can be upset about.

I was thinking about, you know they say Eskimos have 70 words for snow. So Jews have like 70 ways of marking tragedies because we've had a lot of tragedies. But we're kind of experts at marking tragedies. And I thought that was sort of interesting that we mark all of these days leading up to the culmination of the tragedy. Because what we're saying is they're not actually the same thing. Things don't always have to be as bad as they turn out to be. And it's like HaShem gives you stations along the way where you can reflect and repent and think about things. And it's not just like something happens to you. It's like our tradition is teaching us that things develop and every stage is meaningful, every stage you can actually say like, "Wait, wait, wait. One second. Maybe we can turn this around."

And I was thinking it's also the same with our happy times. When God took us out of Egypt in order to give us the Torah, we could have had just one holiday. We could have just had like Shavuot. Ok? But we have a holiday for leaving Egypt, we have a holiday where God put us in booths along the way, and then we have a holiday for Shavuot when we got the Torah. One of the most famous songs that we sing at the Passover Seder is Dayenu. We say like, "HaShem, if You would have just taken us out of Egypt, that would have been enough. We're going to have

gratitude for just that. And if You would have just kept us in the desert and given us manna, that would have been enough. And if You had given us the Torah, but not brought us to the Land of Israel, that would have been enough.” The way that our days are spread out on the calendar teach us not just to look at the bottom line, like what actually happened, like the destruction. Or, the success, but to look also and be conscious of and if it’s a happy thing, grateful for, if it’s a bad thing, repentful for. But to be aware of those nuances, those smaller steps along the way of life. It’s not just about getting to the point, it’s about this whole journey that we’re on with HaShem, whether it’s a journey that’s painful, and has corrections, or if it’s a journey that’s painful and we’re being led on a joyous path. Either way, all of the stages are meaningful.

So I wanted to just like take a moment and actually look at 17<sup>th</sup> day of Tammuz, not just from the perspective of sort of like the promo leading up to the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, but it’s actually a day in and of itself. And the Mishnah teaches us that five things happened on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of Tammuz. It’s actually its own day.



So, the first one we’ve actually spoken about many times. The sin of the golden calf and Moses breaking the tablets actually happened on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of Tammuz. You can count that from assuming that Moshe went up after getting the Torah on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of Sivan. So 40 days later would have been the sin of the calf and breaking the luchot.

And then, the Tamid offering, that was like the daily service in the Temple, the daily sacrifice in the Temple was discontinued. Number 3 is the most famous one, that the city walls were breached, the walls of the old city of Jerusalem were breached. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> ones are really tricky. Nobody really knows what they are about. It says that Apostomos burned a Torah scroll. Most people think that was a Roman governor of some sort, we don’t really know exactly what this was. There seems to be some record in Josephus of there being a Roman governor who burned a Torah scroll and put some kind of abomination on the Temple Mount or in the Sanctuary, that’s number 5.

Now when you look at these five things, you know on Sesame Street when they would say, “One of these things is not like the other. One of these things just doesn’t belong.” Which one looks a little bit strange to you guys? Do any of them look unusual to you guys? To me, when I’m looking at them, they all seem like horrible tragedies. But the Tamid offering being discontinued, that seems kind of minor. I always understood it as like, if the city walls were



being breached and like the enemies are breaking into the old city of Jerusalem, and everyone's fighting and the Temple is about to be burned down in just a matter of days or weeks, obviously you don't really have time for the daily sacrifices in the Temple. That just would seem to be part of the big tragedy, right? Why is that a tragedy?

So the more I looked into it, the more I realized that a lot of the sources teach that the Tamid offering, it doesn't say that all of the sacrifices stopped. Because that would be obvious, right? Like if the city walls were breached and the Temple was about to be destroyed, obviously they're not just carrying on, doing the regular Temple service. But it doesn't just say that the Temple service stopped. It says specifically that the Tamid offering, the daily offering stopped. But what were those daily offerings? Meaning you have the holiday, the festival offerings and the Shabbat offerings. That means that at an earlier stage, before the actual destruction of the Temple, at some point, people got a little bit weary of that daily work, that daily worship, in and out, every day. People still liked the cool stuff. No one is complaining about like Shavuot, bringing the first fruits, really exciting, like the festivals, having the Pascal offering, that's really exciting stuff. At some point, in the history of the Temple and we don't know exactly when, people lost some steam when it came to just the daily in and out, the boring ones, the ones that are just your daily diligence.

And that is its own tragedy. That is not just sort of a footnote on the destruction of the Temple. That in and of itself was a destruction, it was a destruction worth warning for 2,000 more years. Because essentially, if the purpose of the Temple is to sort of model how to live, how to bring God's Presence into the world, how to bring holiness into the world, once they lost sight of the importance of that daily, diligent, repetitive, continuous worship and just kind of wanted the bells and whistles the sizzle, the excitement. That in and of itself was its own destruction that came before the physical destruction of the stones. That in and of itself was really important.

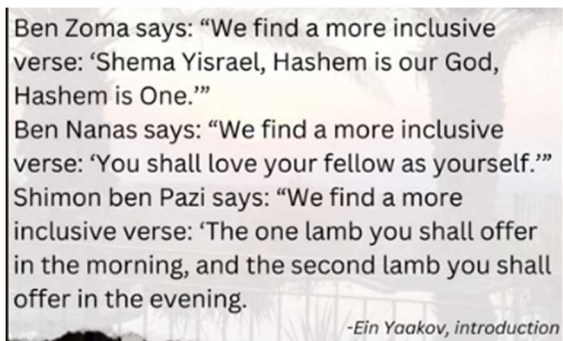
Now here's something that's really interesting. Pretty much every year, not every single year, but pretty much every year, the fast of the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz comes out on the Torah portion of Pinchas. Now the Torah portion of Pinchas that we're going to read this coming Shabbat has a surprising twist in it. It's telling the story of getting ready to go to the Temple, first the blessing for Pinchas and we're getting ready to go on, we're counting the people. And then suddenly it starts talking about the daily offering, which really should be back in Leviticus, right? It says that you'll take the one lamb and bring it in the morning and the one lamb and you'll bring it in the evening. And that comes out pretty much every year right on the week that we mourn the stopping of that very offering. And it doesn't even seem to be its place. That's not the subject, like the sacrifices is not even the subject in this Torah portion. It just seems to kind of jump back onto this Torah portion, onto this issue in our Torah portion and it seems to be calling to us



to say, “What is it about this daily work that’s so important, that we’re mourning its stopping? When it was ceased, that’s something to cry over, that’s something to fast over.”

And it’s like our portion is calling out to us, “Pay attention to this, because that one kind of gets lost in the list.” Like breaking the walls and burning the Torah, those are like really dramatic tragedies. This one kind of gets lost. Most people don’t even know about it. So this portion is calling to us.

And now, there’s a really interesting Midrash and I’m sure that Ari and Jeremy have discussed this with you guys in the past. But there’s an argument between the sages. What’s the most important verse in the Torah? It appears in the book, Ein Ya’acov, quoting this Midrash. It says:



Ben Zoma says: “We find a more inclusive verse: ‘Shema Yisrael, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One.’”  
Ben Nanas says: “We find a more inclusive verse: ‘You shall love your fellow as yourself.’”  
Shimon ben Pazi says: “We find a more inclusive verse: ‘The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the second lamb you shall offer in the evening.’”  
*-Ein Yaakov, introduction*

They’re trying to find a verse that’s so inclusive that it includes all the deepest meaning of the Torah, like it is encapsulates it in the verse. So Ben Zoma says exactly what do you think it would be. What do you think it would be? Shema, Yisrael, of course, obviously. That is like the encapsulation of all of the Torah.

Ben Nanas says, “No, no, no. There’s an even more inclusive verse that includes all of the depth and the profundity of the Torah.” He says, “You shall love your fellow as yourself.” It’s important to recognize the oneness of God, but being a good person to others, that’s like love your neighbor as yourself, that includes everything. Fair argument. We could see them duking that out for awhile.

Then comes Shimon ben Pazi and says... it’s from our Torah portion, from this week’s Torah portion. And it says, “The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the second lamb you shall offer in the evening.” And you’re like, wait, what? That’s the most important? That’s one of the most boring verses in the Torah! That’s not HaShem’s oneness, that’s not kindness to other people, that’s just the daily worship? That’s the most important verse?

And in the end, the conclusion of that Midrash is that the third opinion is the correct one. That actually this idea of doing this daily work and why? It’s because it’s really easy to live a religious life that just waits for those little candy bars of spirituality that are spread throughout the year. Who doesn’t like sitting with their family at the Passover Seder? Even just the weekly Shabbat, but the getting up in the morning and doing the daily worship and just have to day in and day out...I’m sure all the moms know what I’m talking about. Wash the dishes, the dishes get dirty.

You pray and you pray the next day and just doing that daily work, that actually is inclusive...that's the essence, because it's not the easy part. It's not the fun part, it's not the exciting part. That is where you prove your real love for HaShem, your real connection with HaShem in that diligent daily work that doesn't have guts and glory. It doesn't have excitement to it.

And then, it's interesting, right after the destruction of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple, one of the very first things that was instated in Judaism was the daily Amida prayer. And the Talmud asks, "Why do we have to say this prayer? I mean, shouldn't you just pray whenever you want?" Because during the times of the Temple, you didn't have to pray a certain amount of times a day. There was the Temple worship, but you could just pray whenever you wanted, whenever you felt HaShem wanted to talk to you. And they instated this daily prayer because they said, "Since those sacrifices, those daily sacrifices were canceled, the prayer comes instead of that daily service. Having diligence in your prayer, talking to HaShem when you want to talk to HaShem, talking to HaShem when you don't want to talk to HaShem, when you don't feel like it." That is that daily service, that is so important.

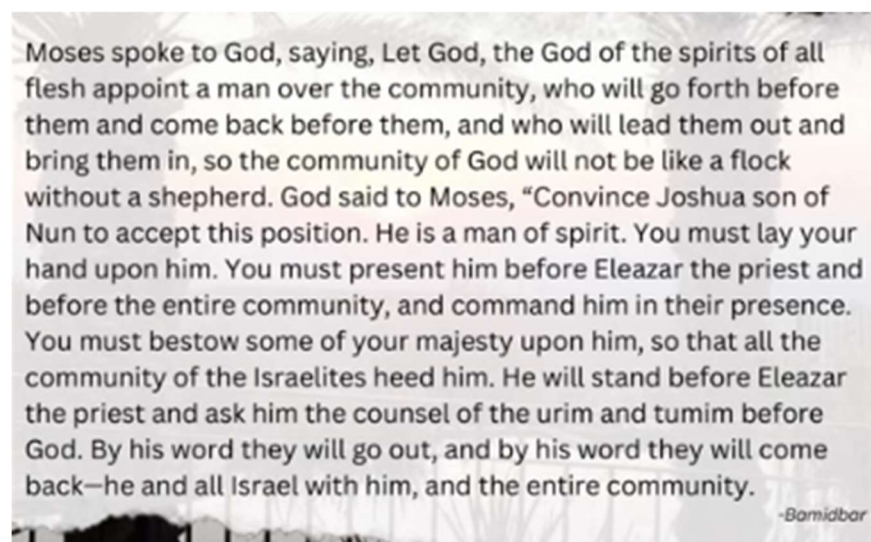
And what's so beautiful about our fast days is that you're not just crying and saying, "Oh, you know, darn it, life really stinks. We had all these bad things happen to us." They all have a really deep lesson. So it's like, "Yes, we stopped doing that offering, but how can we replace it in our lives?" Immediately after the destruction, the Jewish law instated a replacement for that. Ok, fine, yes, we hear the message. We hear You loud and clear, HaShem. Yes, we were not diligent in doing the Tamid offering. We are going to be diligent in prayer. We're going to find a different way. Like, that is the spirit of Torah, the spirit of Israel, is to say like, "Yes, we're sad, we're fasting, but we're not fasting just to be like, 'Wah, wah, wah.' We're fasting because like, 'Ok, quickly. Figure out a way to fix this. How are we going to make things better?'"

I think that's a really deep message for our day that kind of gets lost within all the other things that are relating to this day. But here's where it gets really interesting for me. So, just one last thing. This actually in thinking about this, solved something that I could not understand in the Torah portion. So if this Torah portion is like...I feel like this Torah portion is really related to the message of the day. There's a part of the Torah portion I don't understand. At the end, HaShem tells Moses he's going to die. Ok, very sad. And then Moses says, "HaShem, could You give me a replacement, please? Can you make a replacement for me?"

Now, that's really strange because first of all, Aaron didn't have to ask for a replacement. When HaShem told him he was going to die, it was just like, "Ok," it was going to go to his son. Joshua's been sitting in his tent all the time. It says in the Torah that Joshua never left his tent.

Is it not obvious who's the continuation? And did he think HaShem was like...if he didn't ask, like what? HaShem was going to forget about this small detail? Was HaShem going to forget to make a leader? And then suddenly today it hit me. I understand what's going on. This is the portion of Pinchas. Moshe is not sure who's supposed to be the leader. Because look what just happened. When there was this crazy moment going on who stepped up? It was Pinchas. He had this dynamic personality, this enthusiasm, this charisma. I wonder if Moses thought that maybe the leadership, just like he and Aaron were two Levites who were having the leadership, where one was like the political leader, the judge, the teacher, and one was doing the service. Maybe the two remaining sons of Aaron would split into two lineages where one would be like the Moses character and one would be like the Aaron character. Isn't that interesting? So maybe everything that just happened, like he probably thought up until now that it was going to be Joshua, but then comes in this Pinchas thing and spins it all around.

And then, let's just look at this verse for a second in Bemidbar, in Numbers:

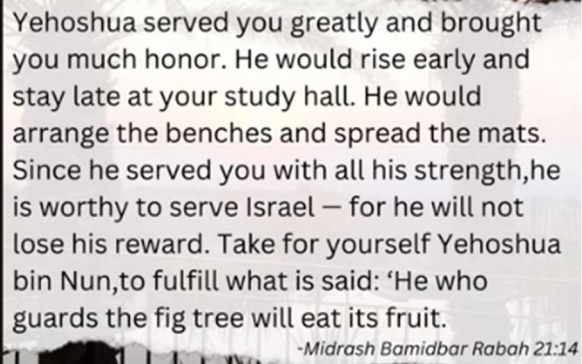


Moses spoke to God, saying, Let God, the God of the spirits of all flesh appoint a man over the community, who will go forth before them and come back before them, and who will lead them out and bring them in, so the community of God will not be like a flock without a shepherd. God said to Moses, "Convince Joshua son of Nun to accept this position. He is a man of spirit. You must lay your hand upon him. You must present him before Eleazar the priest and before the entire community, and command him in their presence. You must bestow some of your majesty upon him, so that all the community of the Israelites heed him. He will stand before Eleazar the priest and ask him the counsel of the urim and tumim before God. By his word they will go out, and by his word they will come back—he and all Israel with him, and the entire community.

-Bamidbar

Where it gets really interesting – He will stand before Eleazar the priest and ask him the counsel of the urim and tumim before the breastplate. He will ask him for counsel from God and by his word they will go out and by his word they will come back – he and all of Israel with him, and the entire community.

It suddenly hit me, it struck me that there's this special characteristic of Joshua. Joshua is very quiet and diligent. Did you notice in the sin of the spies, Caleb makes a big speech. Joshua doesn't say so much. He's on the side of good, but he's quiet. Then the Midrash tells us what he was like. He was always in the tent of Moses. And there's a really beautiful Midrash that actually describes why HaShem chose him.



Yehoshua served you greatly and brought you much honor. He would rise early and stay late at your study hall. He would arrange the benches and spread the mats. Since he served you with all his strength, he is worthy to serve Israel – for he will not lose his reward. Take for yourself Yehoshua bin Nun, to fulfill what is said: 'He who guards the fig tree will eat its fruit.'

-Midrash Bamidbar Rabah 21:14

Is this connecting for you guys to the service of the daily offering? For me, when I read this, I said, "Wow, he was like the daily offering. He was just doing this setting up the benches every day, putting out the mats."

Meaning, if Moses was debating between the exciting leadership of Pinchas that would just come and be sweeping everybody up in his

exciting zealotry, or Joshua who just diligently sets up the mats every day. HaShem says, "That diligence long term is really what we need. I have a special relationship with Pinchas because he was zealous for Me. But long term what we need is a Joshua. Joshua will be the example of what we need in Israel. This diligence of the day-to-day work. And you know what? When he's not sure? You know who he's going to consult? He'll consult the lineage of Eleazar, the lineage of Pinchas. He'll ask them for advice. But the day-to-day work, that example will be through Joshua, having that diligent work."

And I feel like that's really speaking to us in Israel now. This ability. I think one of the most remarkable things, this war has shown this tremendous courage and zealotry for going out and defeating our enemies. But in the end of the day, the soldiers are a minority. And I think that when you look at the people of Israel, you really see also that spirit of the daily offering. That getting up and going to work, going into the bomb shelter, coming out of the bomb shelter, making your kids lunch, going back into the bomb shelter. And just continuing, it takes a certain kind of courage to continue that day-to-day life of the daily offerings, even when you might not be the one able to be the Pinchas, the one able to do the exciting work, but continuing to worship and to pray and to believe and to do what you need to do. In the face of everything that's going on, I think it's a profound lesson of this day and of this Torah portion. So, with that, I wish you guys a good day, a good week, and a lot of courage and strength. Bye, guys.

Jeremy

Hey everyone, thank you, Tehila, that was marvelous, that was beautiful. Also, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz. And also, looking into this week's Torah portion. And what I wanted to do, I'm not going to have time to do today, but I want to share with you two videos. I want to share with you a video because this week's Torah portion that we just came from really gives us a sense of the power of words. And there are two videos that just recently came out that when you juxtapose them, you can really see where Israel is holding now and where we need to go.

And so, the first video is of Prime Minister Netanyahu at the DC meeting with President Trump. He's asked about the two-state solution. And I want you to see what he says. Check this out.

(video)

Asked of Trump

Do you think that there can be a two-state solution that creates an independent?

President Trump

I don't know. I'd ask Bibi that question. You have the greatest man in the world to answer that age-old question. Two states. Go ahead. You give them your honest answer.

Prime Minister Netanyahu

I think Palestinians should have all the powers to govern themselves, but none of the powers to threaten us. That means that certain powers, like overall security will always remain in our hands. Now, that is a fact and no one in Israel will agree to anything else because we don't commit suicide. We want life, we cherish life for ourselves, for our neighbors. And I think we can work out a peace between us and the entire Middle East with President Trump's leadership, and by working together, I think we can establish a very, very broad peace that will include all our neighbors. (end of video)

Jeremy

The entire world is watching this meeting. It's Donald Trump, Benjamin Netanyahu. He had a chance to come out and just knock it out of the park. This is Israel's God-given homeland, the destiny of the Bible. And he didn't do that. He just dropped the ball. We don't want them to have security control because we don't want to commit suicide. That's what was being said. And the very next moment, I saw the ambassador to Israel of the United States who was a previous pastor and a governor. And you can just see, as I shared on the Israel guys, I want you to hear because it's so important. Just check this out.

(video)

Ambassador Mike Huckabee

It's 3,500 years that the Jewish people have been in this Land and it goes back to Abraham who I say wrote the title deed and said, "This is yours." Now here's where I can't escape the biblical part. You either believe the scripture or you don't. And if you do, then you have to accept that when God gave the Land, He gave it to a people and He gave it for a purpose, and He gave it as a place. And it was not nebulous and it was not ambiguous. It was very specific. So, this little

sliver of real estate, that now is the most contested piece of property on earth has a history that goes back to a covenant that God made with the Jewish people.

Jeremy

You know, it's a mirror of who Israel should be. And it even says in the book of Psalms 126, "And then the nations will say, 'Look at what God has done with you.' And then we say, 'Look at what God has done with us.'"

And so we're sort of like watching that unfold right now. But the Torah portion, the message that is all along through it is that Balak, this evil king, he was the beginning of the seed of King David himself. And the prophecies of Messiah, they come through Bilam, this wicked sorcerer prophet. And somehow from these dark, empty, evil places, the redemption comes.

And it's a powerful message for our lives right now in Israel. We're fighting this long war for our freedom and sovereignty in our homeland. And redemption is not always linear. Sometimes the darkest attempts to destroy Israel – whether through curses or terror or political pressure, they're transformed into blessing. And Bilam's prophecy is the biblical example that even our enemies, they can become vehicles for God's ultimate plan.

And you look around today and Israel's enemies in the Middle East have never been weaker. The Syrian regime that was anti-Israel, Lebanon, the Hezbollah, we're winning. And it was all happening because of this horrible process that started with October 7<sup>th</sup>. But just as Israel's destiny could not be thwarted in the wilderness, so too today, in times of war, uncertainty, spiritual confusion, the vision of Bilam literally tells us to lift our eyes to see a star rising. And that star is Mashiach. To see Mashiach rising up, to see that the redemption is unfolding in the Land of Israel. And even if it seems like a dark time in a dark place, that is where the light is stored. The path may not be near, but it's certain. We are a part of something eternal. In the end, there will be light.

So, be blessed, my friends, and I bless you from Israel, and remember to keep Israel in your prayers. The Iron Dome in the Ukraine is only 50% effective. In Israel, it's over 95% perfect. And what's protecting us? Your prayers are the real Iron Dome of Israel. And so, may you be blessed from Zion. And as you bless Israel, Hashem should bless you back many times over with abundance, with blessing, with peace, with protection, with all good things.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

May HaShem guard you and bless you. May HaShem shine His light and countenance upon you.  
May HaShem lift His countenance upon you and bless you with shalom.

Shalom, my friends, have a beautiful week. We'll see you again soon.