

Session 107
Va'etchanan – Seeing the Land
14 August 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMwNO3rpAUE>

Ari

Shalom everybody, can you hear me, can you see me? So here I am in Netanya. I wanted to make the presentation, share the Fellowship from overlooking the view. I don't know if you can even see it. Can you see the beach, can you see the waves? It's unbelievable. Anyways, it's been really special, it's been really great. But I couldn't figure out how to do it without totally blurring myself. I'm not like such so good at technology. But you know, growing up, I had this best friend. Like everybody's like "Ari and Jeremy, Ari and Jeremy." So it was "Ari and Thomas." He escaped from Czechoslovakia when he was seven. Obviously, with his family. And you know he's a special guy and he's done very well. And so I finally twisted his arm and said, "How could you not have a place...if you have the means to have a place in the Land of Israel, you need to get one." And so, he finally broke down after 20 years of my harassing him to get a place in Israel and he bought this place in Netanya, and now I get to stay in it! This is the vacation that we took right here in Netanya. It's really, really nice. Really grateful for that.

And yah, I came up here with Shiloh and Dvash. And it turns out that even when you live in the Garden of Eden, even when you live in the Garden of Eden, it's still nice to have a change and get away a little bit. Which we very, very, very rarely do, but we planned on doing this week. It was going to be a whole week that we were here. Didn't end up being that way, but it's so much fun. I didn't realize how much Dvash is like a sheltered little farm girl. Everywhere we go with her, she's like...."Ohhhh...wow...what is that?" A pole in a parking lot, it's like anything is just so incredible to her. It takes literally an hour to get like twelve feet. She's so enthralled by the amazement of the universe. It is just so delicious to see.

So, yes, we were supposed to be here for a week, but it ended up just being three days. Because I really struggle, I struggle saying no to families and to groups who want to come out to the Farm. And there's no other time that they could do it other than that one day that would be instead of our vacation. I really don't know if it's a virtue or a vice. I just see what the experience of being on our mountain does to people. How transformative it is in a way that I'll never fully understand. And of course, you know, there are families that just wouldn't have experienced it, if I didn't delay the vacation. And I just couldn't let that be. You know one family for example, they were from Brooklyn and they had 11 kids. And they wouldn't have had, what they all told me, was a life-changing experience if I didn't delay the trip. A life-changing experience that bonded them to Judea and to Israel and to a facet of their identity. Where Judaism is not just a Brooklyn religion thing, but it's a holistic, national identity. It's an experience, it's the expression of your soul. It's just a different thing in the Land of Israel. And so, I couldn't say, "No," to that. And I didn't need them to tell me that. I see it myself, I see

what happens to them. And it happens all the time. And thank God Shaena is so supportive. It's just not always clear to me what the right thing to do is, you know what I mean? You really need to have what King Solomon wished for – a lev shomea, a listening heart. I'm not sure that I have it yet, but I'm trying. And I think I'm definitely headed in that direction of having more and more of a listening heart, I think we all are. I think that's a big part of what this Fellowship is really about. That's part of our mission here. And I'd really love to hear how all of you navigate these conflicting priorities in life. I don't really know exactly how to do it. Because there's the family, and I want to give my attention and my love to them. But there's also the greater family, and this Brooklyn family with their 11 kids. What am I supposed to do, just ignore them? I don't know how to do that. I don't know.

But anyways, so instead of Monday, we're returning just a couple of hours after this Fellowship. Because of another very special meeting that could only happen tomorrow. And it's so sensitive that I can't really go into it right now, but I wanted to tell you that it's happening because we'd be grateful for your prayers that HaShem guide us on the right path and lead this meeting to happen as it should. I really hope already by next Fellowship I can tell you more about the details there.

But I really want to make sure that we have plenty of time to discuss this week's Torah portion. Because this Torah portion is just...it's a highlight reel. It's just so packed. And while I know that there is no one, extraneous word or letter in the entire Torah, if there was only one parsha to choose from that has it all, I really think that I would make the argument that it's this one. This is it. We will get into all of that soon. But before we do, I want to introduce Tehila and Jeremy who fortunately, God-willing, are winding up their trips soon. And it's important that they do. It's important that they come back soon. Not only because I miss them and we miss them, Shaena misses them, Dvash misses them, because we do. But because the exile can have an effect on anybody. What's my case in point? Last week we were contacted by an elite unit in the Israeli army who requested the use of our Farm for military and air force training. Daniele was actually just talking about that. It was heart-breaking. We were going to host her out here, but we couldn't bring out people to the Farm. And so, she missed her time to be here and I don't know why HaShem had that in the plan, but Daniele, we're excited to have you out again. But anyway, I'm not allowed to share too many details or too much footage or pictures. I wasn't even allowed to take most of the pictures, but I just want to share a short video comparing what I was going through during these military training sessions and what Jeremy was going through. At nearly the very same time.



So here's a picture of me, preparing for the training exercise and hugging my little Dvash who saw her Abba jump out of a helicopter and run up a mountain to smother her face with kisses. It was a magical moment. And so that's what we were going through. And I want to share this video of what Jeremy was going through.



Did you see that? I just love that. He's sitting there, tapping on the air. It just summarizes so much of Western culture, just illusions and empty fun. But I know, of course I'm kidding. I just love that. By the way, if there's a highlight reel of the whole Fellowship, I vote for that to make the cut of among the highlights. But Jeremy, don't be mad, I'm just playing around. Everybody knows you're on a critical mission over there. Really. I'm getting messages, I'm getting emails, I'm getting WhatsApp's about the light you guys are spreading. It's ok to take a few minutes off and punch randomly at the air as you have goggles over your face. Everybody deserves to play around with Donkey Kong.

But anyways, let's start with Tehila. Here's Tehila:

Tehila



Hey guys. So this week's parsha that we just read was Va'etchanan. And we also just finished the holiday of Tu B'av, which is the Jewish holiday of love. It's not quite like the non-Jewish holidays of love that we know about...Valentine's day...this is the Jewish version. The Jewish version of the holiday of Tu B'av, it says in the Mishna that the single girls would go out into the fields on Tu B'av. And they would dance, wearing white and the young suitors would come and pick themselves a wife. And this was the holiday of love.

And I don't think it's a coincidence...you guys know by now that I don't believe in coincidences. I don't think it's a coincidence, that in this week's Torah portion, we're commanded to love HaShem with all of our hearts and all of our souls and all of our "very," all of our might. And it's also consistently, every year, the Torah portion that comes out on the holiday of Tu B'av, on the holiday of love that symbolizes the love of marriage, the love between a husband and a wife.

So I just wanted to share a little idea. Because the Torah portion and the calendar seem to be guiding us to think about this idea of love. I just want to share one little idea. It was taught often by Rabbi Dr. Avraham Twerski. He would talk about...Jeremy, I know you're going to laugh...he would talk about "fish love." Fish love, what's fish love? So he would tell a story about this rabbi and he saw this guy eating fish. And the guy eating this fish...oh, I love fish, I love fish. And he orders more fish, "Give me some more of those fish." And the rabbi says to

him, "Why are you ordering so much fish?" He says, "Well, I just love fish." And he goes, "Well if you love fish, you would probably put them in an aquarium and feed them and take care of them and not kill them and fry them and eat them. You should say you love eating fish. Don't get confused between what you love for yourself and the actual act of loving someone else. You do not love fish, you love eating fish." And Rabbi Twerski took from that story the message that many times what in the Western world, in the secular world we call "love," it's like loving fish. It's like, "What do you do for me? What have you done for me lately? You're not good for me anymore? See you later."

The biblical idea of love is the idea of loving a fish in the way you love a fish. Jeremy and I are kind of using this language a lot since we learned it. The other day, Jeremy did something that I knew he didn't like doing, but I knew that he knew that it was something that I would really like...like buying kale or something. And I said, "Oh Jeremy, I feel like a fish in an aquarium." And he totally knew what I meant, because this is a term that we use, and it's a really useful way of thinking about things. And so, Rabbi Twerski says that the secret to love, both loving HaShem and in loving the people around us is to always be thinking, "Am I loving fish? Or am I loving eating fish?" To constantly be in that consciousness. And he quotes from Dessler, from his book, Michtav Me'Eliyahu, people get confused and think that you give because you love. But the Torah idea is that you love that to which you give.

So that's why the verse says, "You love HaShem." It doesn't say you love HaShem and you think about Him all the time. It says you love HaShem with all your soul, heart and all your might. You're going to be giving to Hashem. You're going to be doing the commandments, you're going to be learning, you're going to be praying. You act out that love. And the same with the idea of love between a husband and a wife. It's not about what are you giving to me. But, what am I giving to you and from the act of giving, comes love. And so with that, I wish you guys a week filled with love, love of HaShem and love of one another. Bye guys.

Jeremy



Hey, Fellowship. Our speaking tour is done, 42 days, every day practically a new city. We met so many of our members, people that we had never met before. Old friends, new friends, it was one of the greatest experiences of our lives. And just in perfect timing. Like Tehila said, it's a time of love and how beautiful it is to see that our Fellowship is just spreading friendship, love, comradery, brotherhood, just spiritual brotherhood.

And Tu B'av, we just celebrated. And now we're entering into Va'etchanan, where the Land of Fellowship here, Moshe prays to make that final connection and connect to the Land, itself. And in this Torah portion, it's arguably my favorite verse in the Torah. And it says, Deuteronomy, chapter 6, verse 5:

וְאַהֲבַת אֵת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ
וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ:

And you should love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your might. Now the word in Hebrew, if you see right there, it's not might...the word is me'od – with all of your meodecha (מְאֹדְךָ). And this is one of the Torahs that I shared at almost every event on this last speaking tour. And so I want to share it now as we've sort of brought this speaking tour to an end. And they had to translate it into something, but “with all of your might” isn't an exact translation. The word “meod” in Hebrew means “very.” So really the verse reads, “You should love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and all of your very.” That doesn't make any sense, it's grammatically incorrect. So there are, I don't know, 3,000 years of Jews arguing what that word means. It's such a fundamental message in the Torah. Such an important verse. I mean we read it every morning when we wake up. We read it every evening before we go to bed. It's one of the most important verses in the Torah and it's grammatically incorrect, it doesn't make any sense.

So what does that word mean? So most people say, “With all of your meod, with all of your very means with all of your strength, with all of your might, and that's usually how it's translated. But Rashi says, “No, no, no. With all of your meod, with all of your very, with all of your excess, with all of your possessions, all of the things that are around you.” If you have a home, use it to bring in guests, use it to host events that bring people closer to Israel, closer to God, closer to each other. If you have a car – use it for good deeds. Love God with all of your possessions. Another interpretation – with all of your money. Another idea says with all of your family. Another one says with all of your time, another one says with all of your thoughts, another one says...it's just like endless. What does it all mean? And here we are now in 2022 and who's right?

And I think the answer is, and that really is the secret to really learning Torah through a Jewish lens, is that all of those arguments...they're all right. It's just another color in the spectrum of the rainbow of understanding the Torah. What is it saying to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your might? It's to love God with everything you've got. With all of your strength, with all of your courage, with all of your might, with all of your money, with all of your family, with all of your time, with all of your possessions...with everything! And what a perspective! I just see that the culture that I was now immersed in for more than a month, it's just kind of like sedating you, calming you down, watch a video, just don't think too much, don't work too much, try to do as little as possible and get as much as possible. That's really the ideal of where America is kind of pushing the next generation.

And the Torah says, “No, no, no. Love God, love life with ALL your heart and ALL of your might, and ALL of your soul. Give everything you've got into it. Don't just take life for granted. Don't

just live a life where you're sort of like just getting by, sort of in a fearful state. No, no, no. Just eat it up, love it, go big, just love life with everything you've got."

And I feel like this speaking tour was an expression of that. You know when we first moved to the Farm, I remember because Tehila and I, we say the Shema every morning and every night. I'm 42 years old now, and you know sometimes you love God. And so when you say it, it's amazing. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your might. But sometimes you don't really love God. And you say it then, also. You should love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your might. And you say that every morning and every evening. Every morning and every evening. Almost like a Temple sacrifice. There's not much emotions in the Temple sacrifices. The priest is just doing what he needs to do. And kind of building that up every morning and every night. When we had to make the decision to move to the Farm, Tehila and I said this is our chance. This is our chance to love HaShem with all of our hearts, with all of our souls, with all of our family, with all of our money, with all of our possessions. To just give it all we got. If we have one life to live, we have one arrow to shoot here, let's really put our hearts and souls and everything we have into it.

And this speaking tour, it took a lot out of us. I mean, my poor children – in the car, out of the car, in the Motel 6, out of Motel 6, in the car, in the city, waking up...like where are we? What State? What city? What country? What millennia? So disorienting, but we gave it our all. We gave it everything we had. We felt like we brought so much light into the world and just gathered up more and more sparks and collected new members to the Fellowship and made new friends and met old friends. It was just an amazing expression of loving HaShem, of loving each other. And how blessed we are to have this Fellowship that is not only just learning Torah, growing to become better people, growing closer to God, growing closer to each other, but really spreading that fundamental message of loving God, of loving life, of loving each other. Let love be the driving force in our life.

And now this is really the time to start thinking about this upcoming year. To start thinking about tshuva, like Elul is right around the corner. And so, let that be the base of how we reorient ourselves, how we realign ourselves, that it should always be based on love and really to put our best foot forward, to really step into life and just eat it up, love it. And so, we should all be blessed and hopefully, we'll all see you soon on the mountain back in Judea. Shalom.

Ari

That was beautiful. Tehila, that was incredible. Really, really good. And despite everything you had to say, I still love chicken wings. I do. With all my meod. I love chicken wings. But, yeah, I remember years ago, I went on a speaking tour that was six weeks, because we were setting up a speaking tour. You print up these calendars, or at least I did, and they're all like little boxes. And I'm like, "Oh what's another three, four boxes." And then when you're actually there six weeks, it's like, "Oh my goodness." They've been gone even longer than that. I can only

imagine with 5 children? Oh my goodness, they're going to come back and have readjustment syndrome. I always have readjustment syndrome. It's an intense thing. Just not knowing who you are, what you are when you come back. Hopefully HaShem will make that rather merciful and compassionate for their whole family. And it's good to see them.

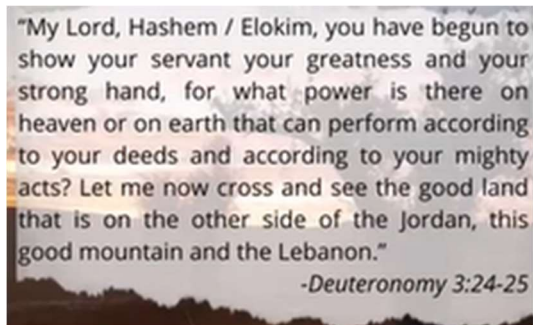
And it's good to see you Brett Rowling! Good to see you Brett Rowling! Shalom! And Richard and Janet, Tom, Cal and Ardelle – you're always at the top which is great because you guys laugh at my jokes and it makes me feel good. Anyways, so it's going to be good to see them, it's good to see all of you. And we are in parsha, Va'etchanan. It's in the book of Devarim. And I was deliberating about whether to go into this, but really it's a fascinating book of the Torah. Because essentially the book of Devarim, Deuteronomy, is a 37-day long speech, given by Moshe Rabbenu, given by Moses, that culminates with his last day on earth. And our understanding is that the first four books, right? Rabbi Jacobson explains this among others, they were the words of HaShem, transcribed directly by Moshe. Hashem spoke them to Moshe and Moshe with loyalty and fidelity wrote every word exactly as Hashem says it. I mean how many times do we hear, "And HaShem spoke to Moshe saying..." And Moshe's writing these words.

But then, the last book, the book of Devarim, the book we've just embarked upon was from Moshe. Meaning like it's from his own part. Moshe internalized the Torah so fully by this point in his life, he so completely integrated it into his heart and soul, that the last 37 days of his life he had so brought it into his heart that he gave it over from within himself. And yet, it's still considered a book of the Torah. Still considered God's words. Even though they're from Moshe's mouth. It's really incredible when you think about it. And that alone is worth focusing on and reflecting upon because as we know, there was never a prophet like Moshe who was such a humble, ego-free vessel that his words are considered no less part of the Torah than God's own words.

And this truth does lay the very important ground work for the concept of the Oral Torah in which the words of the sages are considered to some level, to some degree, to be Divine. Yes, it's less divinely inspired than the words of Moshe, but nonetheless, they are considered divinely inspired. And I bring this up because I love bringing up stuff that I know, finding those things that we don't all agree upon...I love focusing on those, not glossing those over. But I love focusing on those. Because to me, this is not an abstract, theological detail. But it very much expresses the principle of man's role of creative partnership with HaShem, that is central to Rabbinic Judaism, whatever that means. And you know, we've had hours of discussion. Many of you and I have had hours of discussions about this subject and I know that you don't all see it that way and that's why I bring it up. Not to change anyone's mind, but I think it's important that we really understand and appreciate each other. And so, I personally find the fact that Moshe, a human being, of flesh and blood, right? Could reach himself to a level of spiritual

service that the words coming from his mouth could be on the same level as the words of HaShem, Himself.

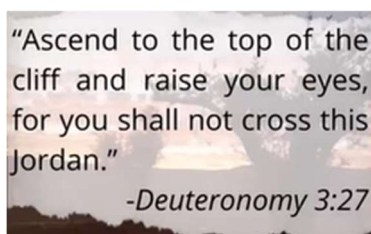
Which brings us to Parashat Va'etchanan, which starts off with the words –



By the way, the sages say that this “good mountain” refers to Har Moriah, Mount Moriah. And Lebanon is also a reference to the Temple. For other reasons, “from Levon” it whitens, it purifies. But anyways, Moshe is pleading to HaShem. It’s not an easy thing to look at. His whole life was building up to this mission, to enter into the Land of Israel. Moshe who has never, as far as I can think, has ever asked

anything for himself, and now he is “pleading” with HaShem, begging HaShem to let him into the Land. And this wasn’t about leadership and continuing his leadership, there’s no ego involved in here. He was more than willing to relinquish leadership. I think he probably couldn’t wait to relinquish leadership. That didn’t bother him at all. He just wanted to enter the Land. He wanted to have that special, unique closeness to HaShem that one can really truly only have IN the Land of Israel.

And how does HaShem respond to Moshe. So according to Moshe, right? That’s the book of Devarim, Moshe is sharing from his heart...HaShem said, “Rav lecha,” it’s too much for you, or alternatively, you have so much already. Meaning you have so many merits already. Don’t ask for anything else. It feels to me, almost as if Hashem loved Moshe so much that it pained HaShem’s heart to say, “No.” And that Moshe shouldn’t ask again, because if he did, HaShem might not be able to say, “No.” I don’t know if that’s heretical, that’s what it feels like to me. That’s the feeling I get when I read it. But HaShem does partially grant Moshe’s request. He says:

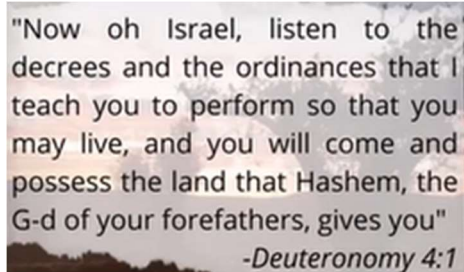


So, Moshe asks to both cross and see the good Land. And while HaShem didn’t allow him to cross, he did allow him to “see.” Meaning He partially granted the request. Now in Jeremy’s sfirah series, remember he gave that whole series and he taught about how each of the forefathers were attributed a certain spiritual, emotional quality which we call the sfiroth, which we are called upon to learn from them and integrate them into ourselves with the proper balance. That’s what the word in Hebrew for an attribute, is a midah, which also means a certain amount, meaning we have to have certain amounts of compassion, certain amounts of strict justice and know when to exercise each one. And so we try to integrate these within ourselves. Avraham was associated with chesed, with loving kindness, and Yitzchak was g’vurah, which is discipline and self-control. And for three organic candies, kosher organic candies, that’s what I offer

everybody that comes to the Farm. What was Moshe's attribute that his very essence embodied? The answer is Netzach...Netsach, it's eternity. And if that word seems familiar, it's because my boy, my sweet son Shiloh that has been popping out smiles all day. I'm just falling in love with my little boy. His name is Shiloh Netzach, because he was born on Netzach sha b'netzchak, during the omer. And if you know what I'm talking about, you know what I'm talking about. If I went into it now, it would take up half of the Fellowship. If anyone wants more of an explanation about why his name is Shiloh Netzach, send me a message and I'll send you the disjointed emotional speech that I gave at his circumcision.

But anyways, netsach means eternity, endurance, foreverness. And Rabbi Asher Sinclair explains that this is why the Torah was given through Moshe. Because everything that Moshe did was eternal, including the Torah. The Torah as we know is eternal. And that's why he couldn't enter the Land. Because if he did, there simply never could have been an exile from the Land. And that wasn't the Divine plan. The exile needed to happen. Whether for one reason or another, whether the nation of Israel needed to collect the sparks, the sparks from around the world, or to fan their flames. You guys, I think, many of you really justify the entire exile just in and of yourselves. Or perhaps just because we just couldn't uphold the level of sanctity that we needed in order to stay in the Land, or maybe they're connected. Whatever it was, the exile was part of the plan. And therefore, the eternal Moshe couldn't be the one to usher us into the Land.

And while Moshe couldn't enter the Land, he needed to see the Land. I actually think HaShem would have let him see the Land even if he didn't make that request. Because by gazing upon the Land of Israel from a distance, by gazing with those yearning eyes and those pining eyes, that feeling of ga'aguim...that feeling of longing and desire that Moshe felt when he looked into the Land. That feeling entered into the collective heart of the nation of Israel for all time. Whether it's a sub-conscious or a conscious yearning, it's there. I see it in so many of you. In Daniele, she was heart-broken. She wasn't able to come out to the Farm and she was already in the Land! She wanted to come out to Judea. Which by the way, I really believe in my heart, that yearning, that fire, something about our mountain in Judea kindles that in a special way, in a different way. In the Jewish heart, in the human heart. Because from my understanding, and I could be wrong about this, it was the mountains directly across from our Farm to the east...just a little bit north of us which was the general area that Moshe stood when he gazed longingly into the Land. And while the prophets of Israel say that Moshe prophetically saw every blade of grass, on the physical, simple level, it may have very well been our area, maybe a little bit north of us that Moshe actually saw with his physical eyes. And you know, again, I could be wrong about that. I just didn't have the time to do definitive research. But what I can tell you is, when I look across the Dead Sea at those towering mountains of the Jordan, I picture Moshe standing there and looking in. And anyways, HaShem said to Moshe, Deuteronomy, chapter 4, verse 1:



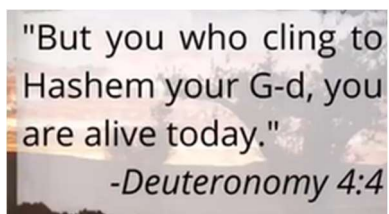
"Now oh Israel, listen to the decrees and the ordinances that I teach you to perform so that you may live, and you will come and possess the land that Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers, gives you"
-Deuteronomy 4:1

And that's the first of many times in the parsha and in the book of Devarim, in the Torah, that this exact sentiment is expressed. That our success and our failure in the Land of Israel is really dependent, first and foremost to our fidelity to the Torah. And if we don't keep the Torah, we're not going to stay in the Land. What makes us better than the Canaanites or the Jebusites or the Hittites or anyone else

if we stoop to their level of behavior?

Anyways, Moshe then goes on to say not to subtract or add to the Torah. Which is both obvious and controversial. I think it's obvious because if it's the Word of HaShem, how can we consider deleting any of it? And it's controversial because in guarding it, it does often feel that the fences we've erected are adding to it to some degree. And I wanted to dive more into that subject, but then we're just not going to get anywhere. But I think you know what I'm talking about. And that's a subject we should talk about because many of you brought that up to me. That it seems like a lot of the Jewish laws seems like it's adding to the laws of the Torah. So let's make sure to talk about that soon. Send me a message if you want me to dive into that at a certain point.

But then comes the verse that I've always found so powerful. It's a verse which has taken its place as a rather powerful verse in Jewish prayer, during the Torah portion of every Shabbat service. And what is that verse?



"But you who cling to Hashem your G-d, you are alive today."
-Deuteronomy 4:4

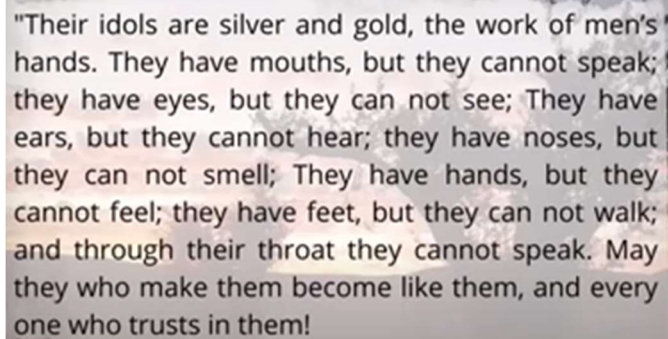
Cling to HaShem. What does that exactly mean? HaShem isn't physical, how can you cling...what does that mean? So the word in Hebrew is d'vakim from the word in modern Hebrew is devak, which is glue. It's more than just adhering to the Torah, it's clinging to the Torah. Sort of I visualize it, like what one would do to a life-raft in the middle of a stormy sea. And I'd say that if

there was one verse that describes the people in this Fellowship? That's the verse. That's the verse that describes all of you. For each and every one of you that I've met, cleaves to HaShem with all of your hearts. That's what really brings us together. You either cleave to HaShem with all of your hearts, or at the very least you're like me...and you at least aspire to cleave to HaShem with all of your hearts. Maybe you don't always live up to that, but at least you aspire to. For me, when I'm clinging to HaShem, what does that feel like? It's like I always have HaShem's Name on my lips. HaShem's in my mind, He's on my lips, my mouth is filled with blessings, both from liturgy, from daily activities, like eating, or after I use the restroom, or you know the established prayers in the morning, in the afternoon, in the night, but also just from my heart when I bless others. Blessing people...that's what I do literally all day, every day, everywhere I go. You can ask Shaena. I go to the merkolet and I buy a popsicle, and I'm blessing the guy in HaShem's Name. That just becomes what I do, like what I say. But it's never

by rote. It's always from my heart. It's been a really great blessing HaShem has given me, is the ability to integrate the power of blessings into my consciousness and bless people all the time. And you can tell they appreciate it. People don't often go around blessing each other in HaShem's Name. That's a deal.

Anyways, for me it's like cleaving to HaShem, it means thinking of HaShem, reflecting on His Oneness and His ways. And in the moment of anger or doubt or fear that enters within me...and it does, sometimes frequently. Whenever that happens to me, immediately...cleave to HaShem and integrate the truth of His sovereignty into that vacuum. Where that anger showed up, that is a gift, that anger, because it showed where that blemish, that vacuum, that empty spot within me was that wasn't filled with HaShem. And it gives me the opportunity to illuminate HaShem into that very place.

And so, clinging to HaShem is the only thing that gives us real life. That's the verse. Those who cling to HaShem, you're all alive today. Real life. If we're not clinging to HaShem, what are we doing? We're putting our faith in man or in money or in nature or in coincidences. That's a big one. Things just happened, things just are. And we're all just fluttering in these winds of illusion. And so that actually brings up the holy words from King David. But before I say that, I just want to say this. In my heart, I want to share. Because we open up with each other, we're honest with each other. I had one of those moments this week. You know I got in an argument with my father. And I spoke to him in a way that was not acceptable. It is not the way that we should speak to our father...particularly on the week where we are hearing the 10 Commandments. That we are to honor our mother and father. And it doesn't matter if I was right or wrong in my argument. That is not about honoring your mother and your father. It is not about right or wrong. We yield to our parents and show them love and respect no matter what. And for some reason, I just lost that. And that week, for the first time in maybe 10, 15 years, I don't remember how long, I got this blemish here, this little thing on my lip! And immediately I said, "That was it. I spoke to my father in such a way with my mouth and that's what HaShem did." And I was grateful for it. And I turned to my father and I said, "Please, please, please forgive me. Look what I got on my lip." And he said, "Forgiven, forgiven." Then I turned to him and I said, "But it's still here. Clearly you're not really forgiving me, I'm really sorry. You deserve a better son than you have and I'm sorry for that." But if we weren't cleaving to HaShem, if I wasn't then I'd be like, "Oh, I just got a thing on my lip. It's not HaShem talking to me in the most personal and profound way." That's why it's real life. Because of that real, raw, open connection and relationship and communication to HaShem. And otherwise, we're just like, to some degree, we're just like idolaters. You know it brings up the words of King David from Psalm 115. He says:

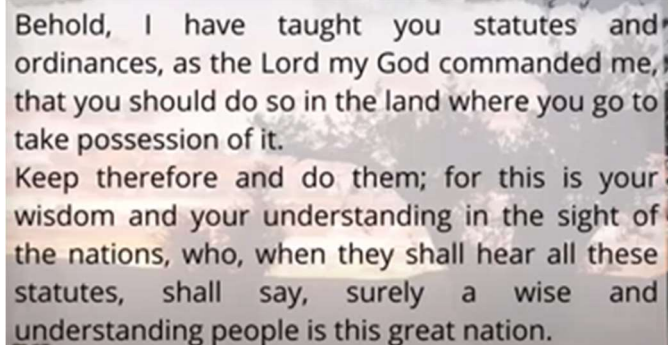


"Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak; they have eyes, but they can not see; They have ears, but they cannot hear; they have noses, but they can not smell; They have hands, but they cannot feel; they have feet, but they can not walk; and through their throat they cannot speak. May they who make them become like them, and every one who trusts in them!

-Psalm 115: 4-8

And that part always really struck me when I said that. You know, because that's one of the Psalms we say on Rosh Chodesh, and on the holidays, it's like it's a very central one. And so, those that make them, those who trust in them, in the end they're like them. They're not connected to the source of true life. The living and sustaining King.

Ok, so let's go on. So, literally, let's go on to the next verse. That's the challenge of this parsha. It's so packed that there's something to say about literally every verse. It's a little bit like when I film Dvash...determining where I start filming and where I stop filming, just feels like an arbitrary decision. Like I'm not going to get that far into this parsha, I can already tell I'm not going to get that far, but that's ok. So, let's continue, chapter 4, verses 5 and 6:



Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land where you go to take possession of it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, who, when they shall hear all these statutes, shall say, surely a wise and understanding people is this great nation.

-Deuteronomy 4:5-6

So the first verse makes it clear that performing the mitzvot of the Torah IN the Land of Israel – that's how we actually take possession of it. Not by putting down flags or fences or security systems. That may or may not be necessary. But the real way to take possession of the Land is by performing the chukim and the mishpatim, the statutes and the ordinances within the Land itself. And the truth is, that in my

heart, I believe that if we remained true to the Torah with integrity and fidelity, not just on personal levels, but on a national level. If we channeled our fear, not to the nations that threatened us, but to the God who sustains us, then we would not need any walls or fences or security systems. Because even the nations who right now hate us and threaten us and plot our destruction, even they would gaze upon us with love and respect and say, "Surely a wise and understanding people is this great nation." And I believe that that is what we are going to be seeing in the days to come. I know right now it seems so far off. We just had another terrorist attack here in Israel. HaShem should heal all those people that were wounded and severely punish the evil terrorist. But, it's hard to imagine all of that in the days to come. But I believe that's what's coming soon and in our days.

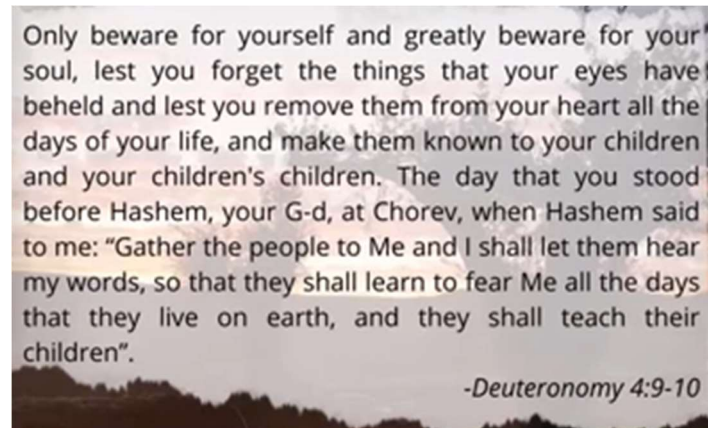
And you all probably knew that what I was thinking when I first read that verse. I imagine you knew because in my eyes this Fellowship is the beginning of the fulfillment of that prophecy. The first rays of that redemptive light...although we're all not all literally of the same nation or

the same religion, whatever that means, this Fellowship is filled with God-loving, truth-seeking souls with the humility and the love to send me nearly exactly those same words every single week. Words singing the praises and the beauty and the wisdom of Israel. I can't help but see the Fellowship in that exact verse the moment I read it.

And notice verse 6. It's different than verse 5. Verse 5 tells us to perform the statutes and the ordinances within the Land. But verse 6 tells us that it's dafka...I don't know how to describe dafka, but it says that dafka it's the chukim. The statutes that will inspire the nations that profess their love of and admiration for us. And I'm actually glad this is coming up because there's someone in this Fellowship. I'm not sure who sent me a message asking me to review the distinctions between the edot and the chukim and the mishpatim. Ardelle, was it you? No, it wasn't Ardelle. And I lost that message and I couldn't find it. Which by the way is one of the reasons I encourage you to please send a second message if for some reason I don't reply to your first. They often just slip through my fingers. And bizrat HaShem, I will answer the second one. So don't give up if I don't respond and forgive me ahead of time if I don't respond. So briefly, edot are testimonies, they're the commandments, that testify to a truth of creation. Like the Sabbath testifies to the creation of the world in six days. Or the Passover Seder and the matzah testifies to the redemption from Egypt. That's why they're called edot. From ed, which is testimony, like a witness.

Mishpatim are decrees that seem to be logical or rational, without which it's pretty clear that society wouldn't function well at all. Like not stealing and not killing for example. And the chukim, well those are the statutes. Those are the commandments, the logic and reason of which are not comprehensible to the human mind. And you know, in verse 6 it says that when the nations see those...the chukim, the ones that we think that the nations would see us fulfilling these chukim and they would consider us superstitious and irrational. But that is what will make them sing our praises. And I was thinking about the reason for this and I'm not sure about the reason that I'm going to share and I would love to hear your thoughts about why it's the statutes, the chukim, that will inspire the nations more than anything else. But I believe that maybe part of the reason for this is because right now the world really wants to believe. They want to believe. They're hungry. Right? The prophet Amos talks about it. They're hungry, not for bread, nor are they thirsty for water. But to hear the words of HaShem. And you know, not just the words of HaShem, not just words at all, but insights and wisdom. The Words of HaShem, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, whose wisdom far transcends what we can understand. And when the people of the world see a nation, the start-up nation, with all the inventions and brilliant technological break-throughs, with an understanding and really a relative mastery of the laws of chemistry and biology and much of the physical world, nonetheless, we lovingly and we wholeheartedly fulfill the chukim, which we can't understand at all. Perhaps that will give them the inspiration that will give the nations, the permission, the license to embrace a higher power that they don't understand as well. And there's nothing that gives more joy and life-force to a soul than reconnecting to HaShem. Disconnecting from

emptiness and vanity and self-worship and connecting to HaShem, the life-source for which every soul has been yearning since the moment that it entered the world. So in the next verses, Moshe goes on to warn the nation not to forget. But not really for them not to forget because they themselves have arguably seen too much with their own eyes to completely forget, but rather HaShem tells Moshe, chapter 4, verses 9 and 10:



And they shall teach their children. That's really what the Torah is all about. That's what it's all about. Since I was a little kid, my father wasn't necessarily observant or religious or educated, but all he cared about was one thing. My education, that I become educated. And it's about educating your children. For people that don't have children, like at the Seder when you're all alone, you should teach yourself as if you were a

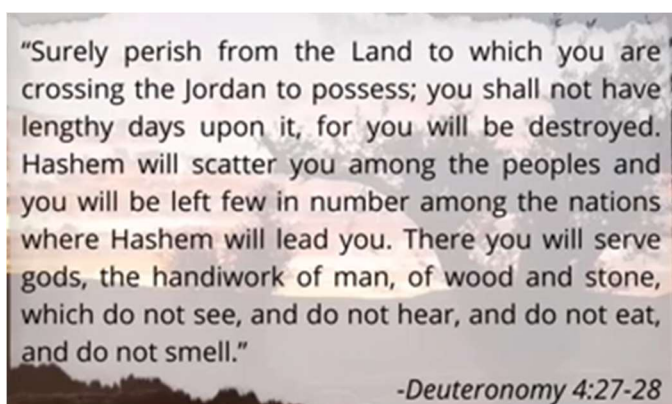
child. As the Lubavitcher Rebbe said. He didn't have any children. Or to teach other people's children. Because we could think that it would be impossible to forget these things. But if we thought such a thing, we would just be demonstrating our lack of understanding of human nature. Just read the Torah, you see it all over the place. The human mind forgets. And the human memory is fleeting. It's a blessing in some ways it's a blessing that we have such poor memories. Because it allows us to heal from the pain and to recover from the loss of a loved one. But it's also a liability to have such a poor memory in that we can totally forget everything that really matters.

And that's why we are so immersed in commandments. From the moment we wake up in the morning till the moment we fall asleep at night. From before we take a bite of food to right after that bite of food. From after we use the restroom to when we happen to see a thunder bolt, or a lightning bolt, or hear thunder, or a rainbow. There's a blessing for everything. Everything in our world is an opportunity presented to us to connect. Because in the end of the day, if we don't use our world to connect, it will be used to disconnect. We will be disconnected through the world. And if we disconnect after everything that we've seen in our lives, what chance do our children have after us? And that's why a lot of sociologists, they explain that Jews rank so high on intelligence tests. Because as opposed to many other nations who seek spouses based on wealth or strength or looks, for millennia of generations, where the most sought-after spouse was a Talmid Chacham – the Torah scholars. That's who everybody wanted their daughters to marry. That is why Jewish education has always been paramount beyond nearly any other priority. School, that's the first thing you do. You set up a school. This directive of Moshe was that deeply ingrained into our national psyche.

So Moshe then goes out to warn the people to beware of falling yet again into the all-to-familiar and dangerous pitfalls of idolatry. Because that illusion, that vice, is just so seductive. To see these powerful forces HaShem created, like the sun and the moon and the stars, that's back then. Now it's the dollar bill and the stock markets or whatever. And it's just so easy to make these things, God-forbid into gods themselves. And you don't have a god that you need to answer to. That has his own will and desire that he's trying to convey to you for your own good. But rather, when you create your own god, you can project your own will and likeness onto that god that you've just created. There's a lot of self-interest in idolatry. It's all about self-interests.

That's what idolatry is, but we don't need to get lost on that right now. Because the repetition continues. I'm telling you, the more I read through this parsha, the more I realize that it's not only among my favorites, but it's also among the most repetitive. And I think those two things are connected. Because the older and the think the wiser that I get, the more I realize that repetition really is one of the secrets to consciousness and awareness. Because the illusions of this world are so thick and so compelling that only if we fight with all of our hearts and all of our minds and all of our souls...if we're constantly repeating and remembering, repeating and remembering do we even have a chance of piercing through these illusions of the world. And even then, it takes a tremendous amount of (Aramaic) help from heaven, to even hope that we'll be able to do that.

Ok, and then there's this brief pause in the narrative of warnings and education in which Moshe shares a prophecy with the people. That if anything, it vindicates all his repetition. Because he ends up saying, despite all of it, the nation will indeed grow corrupt and worship idols and do evil and anger HaShem. Here's the verse, chapter 4, verses 27, 28:

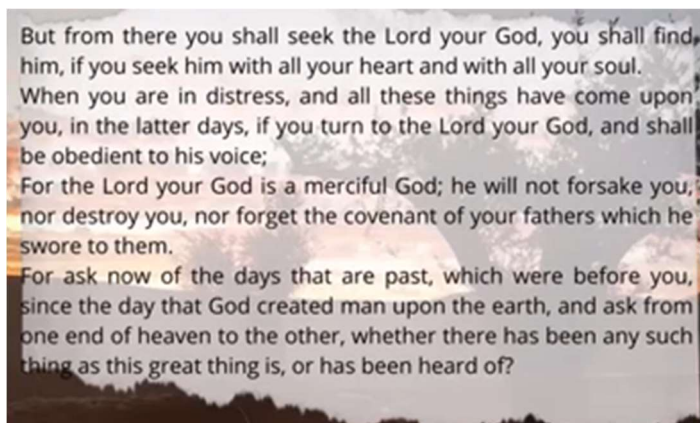


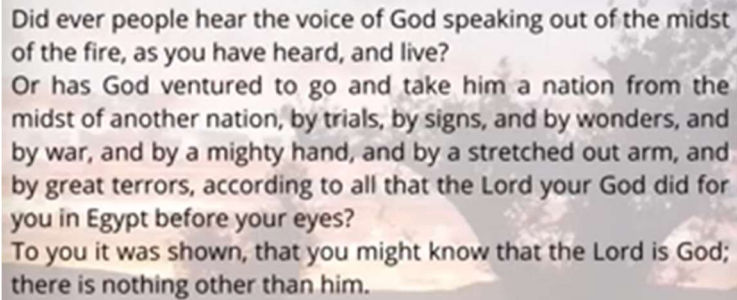
I mean first of all, all of these prophecies of the exiles and the ingathering of the exile, it's so crazy that the Torah would put its credibility on the line. Because never before has a nation been exiled and survived as a holistic entity. Let alone been ingathered and brought back to the Land, but the Torah is filled with exactly those prophecies.

But from the last verse, you'll serve gods, the handiwork of man, of wood and stone, it actually reminds us of Psalm 115 that we just read. But from this last verse, our sages liken a Jew who lives in the exile to idol worshippers. Because if we are serving nations that worship the handiwork of man, who place their faith in forces other than HaShem, even if we personally don't it's almost as if we do. For if they serve idols and we serve them, well by the laws of

transitivity, we serve idols. For if HaShem did create the world and is the ultimate power over the world and we're His nation, and why are we His nation? Isaiah talks about this, I believe chapter 36, verse 25...then why are we His nation? Why are we subject to the will under the rules and authority of idolaters and other nations? So that being said, however, we've seen that when the nation of Israel lives under foreign land and under foreign rule, it's only a matter of time before huge swathes become so tainted and influenced to follow in those very idolatrous ways, in an active way. Meaning not holding on to Judaism and Jewish values and the one God of Israel. But actually accepting and embracing idolatrous gods, God-forbid. We've seen that. It happens again and again throughout the exile. And whether they're doing it because they authentically believe in it or because they delude themselves into thinking that if they embrace and adopt these nonsensical lies, that the nations among whom they've been scattered will all of a sudden, start loving us and stop hating us. A lot of them, that's what it's about. We just want to be loved. Fine, just love us, we'll do whatever we need to do. You believe in whatever crazy, leftist, transgender, nonsense...ok, we're in. We're gonna donate to the Democratic party. I'm not going to get political. I don't even know why I just went there. I should think through before I say that. But there's something to it. That we just embrace the emptiness and the vanity of the nonsense. And that's just for the nation of Israel, the exile is a wholesale disaster and it never ends well. Never.

Oh my goodness, we are running out of time. But right then, after that dark and disheartening prophecy, which I can imagine the nation of Israel listened to like, "Oh God, we haven't even started yet. We're already exiled! We're already doing this!" After that dark prophecy, Moshe does proceed to offer consolation. And offer us one more prophecy. That would take place after all of that, at the end of days, the ketz ha'yamin, that we see happening right now. I believe that this prophecy is what we see happening right now. Because we already saw all of that. So here it is:





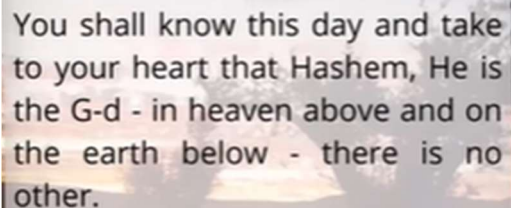
Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live?
Or has God ventured to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?
To you it was shown, that you might know that the Lord is God; there is nothing other than him.

-Deuteronomy 4:29-35

There's nothing other than Him. You guys know me. That's my thing! That's it, that's right! You know me and we've just reached my own personal, primary mantra. You know the words that for me personally anchor me, the deepest and always help me regain my balance when I'm wavering. And I'm not saying it's that way for everybody. You know when I bring people out to the Farm

in Judea, I explain that just because my soul is anchored in Judea and this is the place for me to best live my life as a Jew in the hills of Judea right here. Different Jews have different places in the Land of Israel that they connect to. Maybe different people have different verses that they connect to, but for me, that verse, it's just helped me regain my balance when I'm wavering. Ain ode milvado. Ain ode milvado. There's nothing other than Him. And oh my goodness, we're running out of time.

Ok, so I'm pretty sure that we've done entire Fellowships on these words. But if I had to bring it all together, these words are so precious to me, not because they remind me that there are no other gods other than HaShem. I don't believe that that's what the verse is trying to say. I actually think that's what verse 39 in chapter 4, verse 39 is trying to say:



You shall know this day and take to your heart that Hashem, He is the G-d - in heaven above and on the earth below - there is no other.

-Deuteronomy 4:39

Notice that verse 39, you gotta know the Hebrew, you got to be following in the Hebrew. Verse 39 says, Ain ode, meaning there are not others, but in verse 35 it says, Ain ode milvado, there is nothing other than Him. This verse helps me so much because it reminds me of the deepest truth. Not that there are no other gods, which is obviously true, but there is nothing OTHER than God. He's all that there is. We're

enveloped in His oneness in a way that we simply cannot understand, we cannot fathom it, we cannot wrap our minds around it.

Science is coming to these realities, $E=MC^2$, there's nothing but energy, everything is one. But they can't...they're not really fathoming the consequences of what this science is showing us. It's just too hard for the human brain to understand. We're immersed in HaShem's love and goodness and everything else that we see...enemies, threats, evil, darkness, all of it is ultimately an illusion. A mask that HaShem places over Himself to disguise the truth. That everything is a manifestation of His love for us, everything.

Ok, there's a lot left, I'm going to try to skip through some of these things that I wanted to share. But that's ok. Because you know, in my mind, if we really spend a moment concentrating and focusing on that one truth, *ain ode milvado*, then the rest of the parsha, and there's a lot of it...the 10 Commandments, the Shema, all of it is expounding upon that one deepest truth. They're all different ways in which that one ultimate truth of HaShem manifests itself in the world. In different ways that we can keep that truth in our minds and in our hearts. Each of the 10 Commandments follows a different angle, a different prism, a different expression of the truth of *ain ode milvado*. And the way it manifests itself in the world. The first five which sort of directs the relationship between man and HaShem, they reflect that truth. And the last five which direct our relationship between man and his fellow man, reflect the way that HaShem's oneness is expressed in our relationship with each other.

I'm just fleeting, flying through the most critical ideas. But you'll have to forgive me. Anyways, the more I'm thinking about this, the more I'm thinking that this subject deserves its own session. Perhaps even its own Fellowship. Maybe even a Fellowship that is 37 days long. Moshe Rabbeinu got one. So that would just be really awesome. But it actually physically pains me to be condensing it all this way, when each commandment deserves its own explication. But for our purposes today, this is what it's meant to be because for me personally when I read through the parsha again and again, it sounds to me like Moshe is going through the same torment that I feel like I'm going through with all of you. He's condensing it all himself. Perhaps he didn't know that he would have 37 days left. He didn't know how much time he had left. And he was just trying to get it all out before he ran out of time. I mean he goes from the 10 Commandments to the Shema. You know our primary national mantra, the Shema, he goes right into that. You know the Shema that every child says from their first words of their day to their last words of the day. That we all say from the first words of our lives to the very last words we say before we leave the world. We say *kriyat Shema al hamitah*, at night on our bed. And *kriyat Shema shel hamitah*, of our perishing, before we die, there's a special *kriyat Shema* built all around that. And so what are those words?

Shema Yisrael, Hear O Israel, HaShem Elokeinu, HaShem is our God, HaShem is One.

We all know we could spend the rest of our lives just talking about that one verse. What does HaShem mean? How is HaShem different than Elohim? What does it mean that HaShem is our Elohim? What does one really mean? We could go on and on. But the verses of the Shema continued to the same end. And in many ways, they're a summary of the entire portion within itself. That we should love HaShem with all our hearts, with all of our soul, with all of our possessions, with all of our meeds, right? As Jeremy said. We should take it upon our hearts.

And THEN...this is very interesting. A friend of mind just sent this to me. I never noticed. It says only after we take it upon our hearts and THEN only after we work to internalize them into our hearts will we be able to successfully convey them to our children. We can't just teach

them from our minds. We need to, just as Moshe did, integrate that into his essence, then teach it over so to, we need to integrate it into our essence. And then teach it over. And even if we don't teach it, it will come out in everything that we do. And we will teach our children on the road and in all places and in all times and we should bind these words on our hearts, on our arms, and between our eyes.

What's that talking about? Just think about that for a moment. Why do I put on tefillin? Phylacteries, every single morning. I think I missed one day in 20 something years. Why do we do that? Why do I do that? I put one on over my forehead, what's the forehead? The seat of my intellect. And the other, inside of my arm, opposite my heart. The intellect, well we can decide what we think. We can, we can decide, it's not easy, but we can decide what we think and what we learn and what we focus on. But our heart? We can't always control that. But, if we bind our minds to HaShem, with all of our focus, and all of our efforts and all of our life-force, then with HaShem's help, we can internalize that truth into our hearts, which will then burst forth with emotion and love for HaShem and love for His Torah. Our heads and our hearts, both of them together. Our minds and our action, to internalize the truth of ain ode milvado into every bit of our essence.

And so my friends, I want to bless all of you. I want to bless all of us, all of us that we should be able to live that truth, to understand it, to internalize it, we shall know that day and internalize that day into our hearts. That we should merit to be among those that are clinging to HaShem, that we should be among those that cleave to HaShem and that are truly alive on this very day.

And speaking of blessings, here we are and I would love the honor of blessing you again, the blessing of Aaron the High Priest that he gives to the nation of Israel. And yes, as I tell you every week, I am not a descendant of Aaron. I am from the other tribes of Israel, but God does tell us, HaShem does tell us that we're an am kohanim, we're a nation of priests. So it's my honor to bless all of you.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

May HaShem bless you and protect you. May Hashem make His Face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May HaShem lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. Amen.

Thank you, my friends. Shalom, shalom, be in touch, reach out all the time, love you all!