

Session 146
Devarim – The Joy of Mourning
23 July 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fJNQNGR8Lc>

Ari

Hello, can you hear me? Give me a thumbs up if you can hear me! Shalom everybody, so good to see you. It is good to be back, very good to be back. Just give me a moment, let me just take it in. I'm just looking at your faces. Loving every minute of it. Hi Stefanie, hi Martin, Miriam, shalom! Landauers, Jeremy, good to see you! Shalom everybody, good to see you, it is good to be back together again, I will say that. I think it was important. Truth is that there were a series of unforeseen events that made the Fellowship a prohibitively difficult challenge, leading me at least to declare a two-week break. But in retrospect, I really see the divine guidance there because while I can only speak for myself, I personally felt a certain renewal happening within me. Which is why these great yeshiva bastions of Torah that take Torah learning very seriously, do exactly the same thing. Because we all need renewal. We all need renewal. Even from the greatest, holiest task. Right? We need renewal even sometimes from the very thing that we turn to in order to find our greatest renewal, which for me...is this Fellowship.

But anyways, when I opened up the Torah portion, the first words I saw strengthened that message. That we did the right thing. It strengthened that very renewal that we were talking about. Because the book of Deuteronomy begins with the words – These are the words.

THESE are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel, on the other side of the Jordan, concerning the wilderness....
-Deuteronomy 1:1

And in the Tanakh, the words “these” are used in that capacity and that way, when it’s like a declarative statement. Something new and novel. These are the words. In and of themselves, words of renewal. We’re not just getting a second rendition, these are the words...there’s new commandments, there’s entirely

new things and new words and we’re hearing it from Moses, himself.

Now in the Tanakh, essentially the entire book of Devarim, of Deuteronomy, is a 36 day long sermon given by Moshe to the entire nation of Israel. Thirty-six days. And it wasn’t just given to them, it was given directly to each of us as well. And I really believe that if we open up our hearts, these words have the ability to renew us and to create us. To create us in entirely new ways that we can’t even imagine. Because the truth is, that there’s more than a bit of irony in the fact that Moshe Rabbenu, Moses our teacher, the greatest prophet that ever lived was the one delivering this epic, prolific sermon, more than any sermon in the history of the world. Because let’s remember, this was the same Moshe, who when God wanted to send him to redeem the nation of Israel, he turned to HaShem and he said:

Oh my Lord, I am not a man of words (Lo Ish **DVARIM** anochi), neither yesterday nor the day before, nor since you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue.

-Exodus 4:10

Did you hear that? That's not lost on me, right? I'm not a man of words. The word for "words," ironically is devarim. And here he is, the same Moshe, the same stuttering Moshe, standing before the entire nation, delivering the most consequential words in history, which is the book of Devarim. I'm not a man of words...he ends up, yes he is "THE" man of words. The man of Devarim. And so that's powerful. So you see, he thought he wasn't an ish devarim, and he's composing and dictating the fifth and final book of the Torah, the book of Devarim. Such is the power that walking in our journey, faithful to HaShem can do to us, can do within us. It can renew us in the most fundamental way imaginable, even more than renew us. You know it can craft us, it can create us, it can make us into the best version of ourselves, possible beyond what we can imagine.

And I'm eager to dive in and talk about these words of renewal. I want to share my heart with you about all of this. But not only about the Torah, by the way, but also I think mostly about the period of mourning that we're in right now that is so rich in growth and in potential. But before I do get into any of that, I want to introduce my beloved friend and rebbe, Jeremy Gimpel. Talk about renewal, you know, he was supposed to be back awhile ago. I haven't seen him really, I feel like in two weeks! So this is a renewal there, also. So...but finally, thank God, he made it home after during one of the most night-mareish travel stories I've ever heard. So Jeremy, it's good to have you back. Welcome home, shalom!

Jeremy

Yeah, thank you so much. It's so nice to be here, so nice to see everyone on-line. It was an amazing trip. We got to see so many of the Fellowship members come together in person, meet each other. It was just awesome. And then Monday night came. You know my last event was Sunday night in the Fellowship in Florida. And then Monday, I got in the airport and my flight was cancelled. And I was like, "Ok, that happens." And then Monday afternoon, my flight got cancelled. And then Tuesday morning my flight got cancelled. And then Tuesday afternoon my flight got cancelled. I made it back to Israel. I left the hotel on Monday evening and I got back to Israel on Friday morning. That was the most unbelievable journey home that I have ever had. I think it was five flights that were cancelled in a row. And there was one time in the end where the plane left Orlando, and I was in the air on my way to New York. And I was gonna catch the next flight to Israel. And then in the middle of the air, they're like, "Oh, sorry! We're having some sort of technical difficulty. We have to turn back around." And I was already celebrating in the air. I was already almost home, and then another night and another hotel. I mean it was just absolutely excruciating.

And then Tehila said, "Well you know, as you were leaving it was the beginning of the nine days. And there is just a tradition that the nine days before Tish b'av are just a time of challenges.

That if you sort of had judgment that's on you throughout the year, sometimes it will all be brought into these nine days, in kind of like misfortune after misfortune might happen to you.

And so, Sunday morning, in the beginning of the morning, I wake up in the morning and I go outside and my 19-year-old son, Lavi, who usually a brilliant boy, reverses our car, crashes into this electric box, destroys the electric box, the whole back of the car is destroyed. And Tehila looks at me and she's like, "It's just the 9 days." And so it's really been a hectic couple of days. I'm just waiting for Tish b'av to be over so we can get through this sort of auspicious time for misfortune. But I do have something that I wanted to share with the Fellowship that really touched my heart. I was talking to Tehila over Shabbat and we were just talking about the challenge of having to go with the flow. There's so much in this world that's so radically out of our control. And what do we do with that? When things don't go the way that we want them to go but we have just no control over it, the only thing you can really do is let go and let God.

And we think about this Torah portion, and the book of Devarim, so much of it is Moshe just retelling the story of the exodus from Egypt, the travels through the desert, and from his perspective. What it meant to him, how he saw things unfold. And why is that such an important lesson at the end of the Torah? And we were talking about it all of Shabbat and we had beautiful friends over for Shabbat from California and just kind of exploring this idea. Like, why would that be the end of the Torah? Retelling the whole story once again, sort of highlighting...like well, we sent in spies at the beginning of the book of Devarim, and retelling that story, and the failures and the wars that happened. Why the retelling?

And I think that Tehila really nailed. I think I have to give her credit for this idea. But she says, "Most of the Torah is teaching us that we have to be in a constant state of training. We're constantly training ourselves. We're constantly commanded to do mitzvot, to give charity." You know you get a paycheck? Ten percent of that money should go to charity. You get another paycheck? Ten percent of that money should go to charity. It's something that happens all the time. You wake up in the morning? You should start your day with prayer. You wake up every morning, you go to bed at night and you say the shema before you go to bed. Every night. Sometimes you feel it, sometimes you don't, you just do it. The Torah is training you, it's trying to create an embodied knowledge. It's trying to take the knowledge, the wisdom of the Torah and integrate it into our being. The only way to do that, is by consistently practicing out what you believe.

And then what is the book of Devarim say? The book of Devarim says that every once in awhile, there are going to be moments in life where there's going to be almost a fork in the road. And it's going to be choose your own adventure. And how do you choose your own adventure? It is literally by the person that you have become. If you've become a person of courage, then you will choose the courageous path. And if you become a person of virtue, you'll choose the virtuous path. And then what really is the retelling of the book of Deuteronomy? It's like

saying, listen, it's not every day. You're training every day, but it's like spring training. But every once in awhile, it's game time. Every once in awhile, it's like the real world. It's like all of the training comes out to these moments in time. Out of 40 years, there aren't that many events. I mean maybe once every few years, there was an occurrence that's actually recorded in the Torah of this 40 year adventure through the desert.

That's what it's teaching us. That's what life is all about. Life is about those few events in that 40 year adventure. And then in that 40 year adventure, if you work on yourself to become who you need to be, when the time comes, are you going to send in the spies? Are you going to listen to Joshua and Caleb? Are you going to listen to the other ten? What's going to happen there? And so why is that the ending of the Torah? The ending of the Torah is telling us that you have 613 mitzvahs to keep here. There's an entire world of commandments, of physical training, of spiritual training, of emotional training, of emunah training, of faith training. And then, moments in life will come and it's like all of that training is for those moments.

And so we're all going to have those moments in our lives. What are we going to do when that fork in the road happens? And by that time that the fork in the road happens, you can choose right...the true path, the courageous path, the virtuous path, the high ground, or the easy path. And by the time that you get to that fork in the road, it's too late. You are who you are and your decision will be made based on the person that you are.

And so the Torah is saying, "Train yourself, train yourself, train yourself." Look at what happened guys, look at what happened throughout these 40 years. They weren't training properly. So when you go into the Land of Israel, remember. Learn the Torah, every morning and every night. Keep it close to your heart. Train it, practice it, because the challenges are going to continue in the Land of Israel. And so, all of life is really training us for those moments in life. You know, Tehila and I had to make a decision. We had to say, "Well, are we going to sell our home and put all of our life, our children, our marriage...we're going to like stretch it to the limit and build a home in the most contested real-estate in Israel? And in the middle of the Obama administration? At that time no one thought Trump was going to get in. It was going to be Obama and then into Hilary. In the last act that President Obama did as President was to wire \$220 million dollars to the Palestinian Authority. You're going to sell your life's savings, your home and put it out there? Like, that's a fork in the road that has changed our lives in the most dramatic way possible. That is probably, aside from actually marrying Tehila, the move to the Farm was the most fundamental shift that we've ever experienced.

And we realized that all of our life up until that moment was training us and preparing us for that moment of truth. And that's what changed everything for us. And that's why the end of the Torah is reminding us that we have to be training ourselves everyday, training our children everyday. Because those moments of truth, they arrive. And by the time they arrive, you are

who you are. So you better be strong enough, wise enough, smart enough, good enough. Because when those moments come, that will determine your fate.

And so we should realize that the book of Deuteronomy is just waking us up for game day. And it's not a coincidence that it comes always, every year right around Tish b'av, where am Yisrael, the nation of Israel, when the moment of truth came, we were destroyed and exiled. And then, it's been a 2,000 year practice to get us back in line, get us back to the Land, rebuild this Land, rebuild our country, rebuild our language. Cause right now Israel's going through another moment of truth right now. The nations is like...there's two demonstrations happening right now simultaneously. The against reformers are in Jerusalem and the reformers are in Tel Aviv, and it's happening right now.

And so, may HaShem bless us to become who we need to become, to walk through the challenges of life in the best way possible. That's really what Moshe Rabbenu in this last speech, the greatest speech and the most impactful speech, arguably in all of human history. It's really here to remind us that the moment of truth is around the corner. So we need to build ourselves into who we need to become today. And so, we should all be blessed.

Ari

Amen, Jeremy, thank you, thank you. And I have to say that there's actually three demonstrations that are happening right now. Correct me if I'm wrong, Jeremy, but our friend Tobi just sent us a link. There's the demonstration against the judicial reform, there's the demonstration for the judicial reform, and then there's the demonstration for love and peace. For reaching a compromise that can bring us all together. And I think that that's a demonstration really worth thinking about and reflecting upon during these 9 days, if we're really going to take them seriously. And this is a time to rectify the baseless hatred of the past, then just the endeavor to have a demonstration that is bringing...I know it sounds fluffy and liberal, but to bring us to a place that we can all come together, this is the time for that. That's true, right Jeremy? That is happening.

Jeremy

That is true that that is happening. Actually also this morning Benny Gantz, one of the opposition leaders was at the Kotel. I'm a little bit cynical on that. I feel like they want peace and unity, on their terms. There'll be peace and unity when we kind of bow our heads toward what they want. And so Benny Gantz is there with a kippah on his head at the Kotel, calling for unity on his terms. So I think a lot of very good intentioned, well-intentioned Jews have like called on the streets, calling for unity, but I think that maybe on the other side, it's a little bit less pure.

But I do think that Ambassador Friedman, who is arguably the greatest American ambassador in Israel's history, he's the one that really spear-headed the move of the embassy to Jerusalem. He

was out on the Arugot Farm last year, a lover of Israel, just a wonderful, intelligent, sharp man, has said exactly that. He just tweeted it out. He said, “You know, right now, it’s like the 9 days right before Tish b’av and the nation has never been so divided in such a public display of disunity.” He wonders if maybe they should just wait to pass the bill a few days after Tish b’av, and not like the eve of Tish b’av, have this bill passed. I thought that was kind of interesting that he said that.

Ari

You know it’s funny, it makes me think of the disengagement from Gaza, which was one of the worst, darkest stains on modern Israeli history, if not all of Israeli history. Where I was literally, physically lifted up along with thousands of others to ethnically cleanse Gaza of Jews and give it to Arab Jihadists who have been murdering those very Jews. And they did it on the 9th of Av. I was like...could they have selected a better time to do that? It’s really almost like this day is just a magnet for exactly that.

And that’s what I want to talk about right now because now being we’re in the very midst of the 9 days of the 9th of Av, is approaching really quickly, I want to start by speaking about the Temple. I am not a specialist, I am not in the Temple Institute. I’m just a regular, simple Jew that yearns for the Temple, that prays for the Temple. I don’t know every single detail of every single prophecy, but I do know that the Temple is not just another subject. The Temple is the culmination of our national mission on earth. It’s the reason of reasons.

And of course, with every potential light comes an equal and exact opposite amount of potential darkness. And therefore the Temple is one of the least understood, the most misunderstood subjects that there is. You know as a matter of fact, I just spent this last Shabbat in Ramat Rachel, with a group of wonderful German tourists, that are here actually in Israel not going to the normal tourist attractions, but are just sitting in Jerusalem studying the Bible all day, led by my friend, Werner. And of course, you know the subject of the Temple came up in our discussions. Do we still want it? Why do we even need it? Do we even expect to build it really? Someone said that he spoke to a rabbi that said that there’s no orthodox Jews, almost every orthodox Jew doesn’t really expects to rebuild the Temple. And I was like...that is just so anti-thetically opposite to the truth! That is such a part of who we are and what we’re about. I thought that certain things were so basic that everyone knew about the collective aspirations of the Jewish people. And it just turned out that that’s not so clear at all, like I thought.

And so I want to take this opportunity to speak about the Temple. Because a question that I received, not only over Shabbat, but also from people in this Fellowship, is whether we really need the Temple. If God is everywhere, then why? Isn’t the goal to make our hearts into the Temple? Isn’t the Temple wherever we go, within us? And these are good questions. They’re fair questions, they’re healthy questions, because if the Temple is as central to the Jewish faith as it is, something that we pray for many times a day. Not only in the three daily Amidah

meditations, but something as obscure and perfunctory as after we eat bread! You know we're praying for the Temple. What does one thing have to do with the other? We're praying for the Temple constantly all the time. We're thinking about it, praying for it. And so the essence of the question is "why?" You know if HaShem created the entire world as the prophet Isaiah says in chapter 6, verse 3, His essence fills all of creation, then why does the Temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem so important?

Now I'm sure you have a lot to say about this Jeremy. And hopefully in the end you'll be with us, you'll be able to say. I know you just landed, things are crazy, and so you'll have things to contribute here. But I just wanted to take it from one angle. Because we can't possibly include it all now. But you know Rav Kluger, I think he touched on it in a beautiful way. He brings the verse from Genesis 28, verses 10 and 11:

And Yaakov left Be'er Sheva and he went to Charan. And he arrived at the place...

-Genesis 28: 10-11

Right? At the place. And of course as you know, our sages teach that the "place" that Ya'acov speaks of where he laid down his head and had his dream of the angels ascending and descending that ladder, was Mt. Moriah. That's where the Beit HaMikdash, the Temple

would be built. That was the place. And he woke up from this magnificent dream – it wasn't even a dream, it was a vision, it was a prophecy. And he declared:

"Indeed, Hashem is in this place, and I did not know.... This is none other than the house of Hashem and this is the Sha'ar HaShamayim (Gate of Heaven)"

-Genesis 28:16

The Gate of Heaven – Sha'ar HaShamayim. Now let's look together at the word "shamayim," heaven. Maybe I went a little bit too deep into this, but it is what it is. Now in Hebrew, the word "shamayim," doesn't only mean heaven. It also means...who knows what it means? It means the sky, which that can sometimes cause some confusion. Particularly when you're

younger. When I was a kid, I always pictured God somewhere in the sky, in a throne of clouds. Even now, when I talk to HaShem, I often look upwards, as if HaShem is somehow up there. Even now. Am I the only one that does that? Raise your hand if you look up when you talk to God. There's a lot of us there. And there's a lot of us also who don't. That's really interesting.

You know so the Ramban Nachmanides points out that just as with everything else in the physical world, that has an earthly manifestation of its Divine, spiritual root, there clearly are two dimensions of heaven. We see this from the story of creation. So the first verse of the Torah starts off:

In the beginning God created the heavens (*Shamayim*) and the earth.

-Genesis 1:1

But on the second day, we see the Torah teaches us, verses 6-8:

God said "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate between the water and the water." So God made the firmament, and separated between the waters which were beneath the firmament and the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. God called the firmament: Heaven/Sky "*Shamayim*". And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

-Genesis 1: 6-8

So you see it there, right? You see it right there, the challenge. Which is it? Was heaven created...it says *shamayim* was created on both of those days. Was heaven created on the first day, as the first verse states? Or was it created on the second day as the second verse states?

Nachmanides points out that the *shamayim* of the first verse is referring to the spiritual heaven, the spiritual dimension of reality which was created on the very first day of creation. The second verse is a reference to the actual sky, which I believe is called *shamayim* because it's an illusion to, it's reminiscent of the spiritual heavens. It's the physical manifestation of that spiritual realm. And he drives home this distinction by referencing this from the book of Psalms in chapter 148, verses 1 and 2:

Praise Hashem from the heavens (*shamayim*) praise him in the heights. Praise Him all his angels...

-Psalms 148:1-2

The angels are right in there. Here we see that this *shamayim* is a reference to the first verse of the Torah, which the dimension is spiritual and angels are praising HaShem in the real *Shamayim*, in the spiritual heavens. And this is contrasted with the next verse in the same Psalm of 148 that discusses *shamayim* of this world, of the physical

realm. It says:

Praise Him sun and moon; praise Him all stars of light; praise Him the skies of the highest heavens and the water that is above the heavens

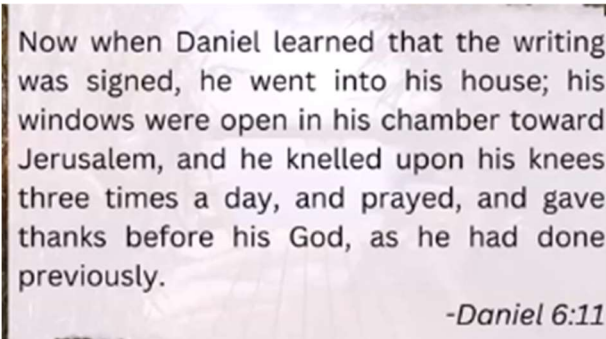
-Psalms 148:3-4

So all of these clearly are elements of the physical *shamayim* which are in the skies above. And by the way, I know I could have made this point briefly by summarizing a conclusion. But all I knew that there are times when I really think it's worth going into the sort of logical derivation process. So you can see how the Jewish mind and the Jewish approach to biblical exegesis works. I hope you enjoy that and find it valuable. And if you don't, let me know! Ok, anyways, point taken.

So why is this whole talk about the distinction between the two shamayim important? I believe it's important as we've learned above, everything has a spiritual parallel, everything is rooted in the spiritual dimension. And the spiritual dimension of the skies above are the heavenly shamayim, the heavenly realm. So it's not totally off base that we look up at the skies when we talk to HaShem. Because the two shamayim, while they are different, they're still nonetheless inherently connected. The skies above are an illusion to the spiritual dimension which we come to call heaven.

And I was also, by the way, deliberating whether to use heaven at all. Because you know Western thought has infused so many different understandings into the word heaven. You know you picture, when you say the word heaven, randomly floating cherubs shooting arrows, right? And of course, heaven is the eventual home of course of all dogs. I don't know if you know that one. All dogs go to heaven. It could just be easily misunderstood. Nonetheless, I think it's a risk worth taking to use these words because at the end of the day, we all in this Fellowship know that the heavens that we're talking about, the spiritual dimension, it has its own set of laws and creations which were seen and described by Ezekiel and Jeremiah in the prophets of Israel, with the different types of angels that are there.

Anyways, so Rav Kluger gives a modern day parallel. He says that just as today, if we want access to the physical shamayim, this worldly sky, we need to board an airplane. Sounds easier than it is apparently when you hear about Jeremy's last few days. And in order to actually board this airplane to make our way into the sky, we need to make our way into the airport and pass through a gate and board that plane which will take off and soar us through the sky. But we need to go through a gate. And it's the same thing. Rav Kluger explains the heavenly shamayim. To access this spiritual heavens of God's abode, we need to go through a gate. And where is that gate? That's right. The gate is the same gate that Jacob saw on Mt. Moriah. This is the gate of heaven. The Beit HaMikdash, the holy Temple that was and IS the gate through which we can arrive at the realm of the higher spiritual reality and spiritual truth. I mean there's a reason that Jews around the world face Jerusalem when we pray for thousands of years. Actually the biblical source for that custom goes back to the book of Daniel, the prophet Daniel who in chapter 6, it says:

A photograph of a book page with text from Daniel 6:11. The text is printed in a serif font on a light-colored background. The text reads: "Now when Daniel learned that the writing was signed, he went into his house; his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, and he knelled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously." The text is enclosed in a thin black border.

Now when Daniel learned that the writing was signed, he went into his house; his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, and he knelled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

-Daniel 6:11

Towards Jerusalem. Because it's our fervent belief, even an experience I can say by now, not only a belief, that all prayers are focused to that one place and then channeled upwards to the Creator of the Heaven and Earth. That's the vessel, that's the conduit of our prayers.

And so the answer is, “Yes,” HaShem’s Presence is everywhere as Isaiah and the prophets of Israel teach. But the revelation of that truth in this world is manifested to the highest degree possible in the holy Temple, in the Beit HaMikdash on the Temple Mount.

And so we learned in Exodus chapter 25, HaShem tells us:

They shall make for me a Mikdash, a Temple, and I will dwell within them.

Not within the Temple, itself, not with an “it,” but within us. HaShem will dwell within us. When we’re in the Temple on Mt. Zion, HaShem reveals Himself to the world from within each of us. And that’s why it’s so important to understand that when we’re praying for the Temple, we are not praying for the construction of some building. We are praying for the restoration of the deepest and the most intimate relationship with God from within our very souls. We’re not mourning the building itself, that’s actually what God said when our behavior was so horrible. He said I’m inflicting upon stones and wood what you deserve to have inflicted upon you. That’s what we’re mourning.

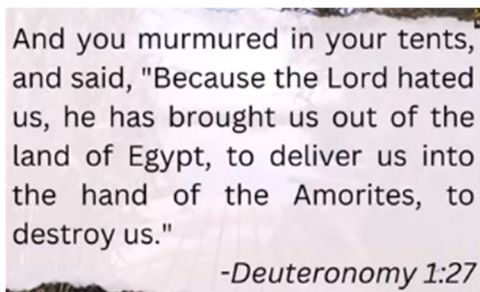
You know there’s actually a beautiful analogy, that Rav Shlomo Carlebach, he shares, he says it like this: Imagine that I loved somebody very much. And we always met in a certain place under a certain tree. And then God forbid, something happened and we’re not so close anymore. When I come to that tree, I’m alone. Can you imagine how much I feel the absence of that person? I’m crying, “Where is this person that I love so much?”

And that analogy, obviously it only goes so far. But on one level, it’s true. It’s true in the sense that it isn’t the building, the Temple, that we’re yearning for. It’s not the tree. It’s the relationship that the building of that Temple represents. It’s the relationship that we had when that Temple was first built. But it’s human. It’s human nature to get lost in the superficiality and the building. It’s human to get lost in the externalities. And while the external dimension is real, if that is the extent of how we relate to it. If our relationship ends there on the external, earthly dimension, and it’s just a building to us, then it becomes empty and hypocritical. It becomes a mockery of its true purpose. And that is the reason the Temple was destroyed in the first place. Because we were going to the Temple and offering sacrifices while our hearts were somewhere else altogether.

So there are two hints in the Torah portion, I think two references that help us understand the root of the destruction, the root of the 9th of Av and therefore can lead us to understand what we can do to affect the redemption. What we can do to affect the rebuilding.

Now the first is in the Torah portion, itself when Moshe recounts the very first 9th of Av, when the spies returned from the Land and shared an evil and faithless report, slandering the Land of Israel. And the nation accepted that report. That’s what’s so sad. Not that these ten leaders

that had vested interests said it, but that the nation accepted that report and the nation wept. On the day that HaShem was showing us His greatest love for us, His greatest gift to us...we wept. Not tears of joy, but tears of grief and sorrow. So verse 27, chapter 1 in the book of Deuteronomy:



And you murmured in your tents, and said, "Because the Lord hated us, he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us."
-Deuteronomy 1:27

Because He hated us! It was like we just didn't have the vessels to be able to receive and understand HaShem's love at the time. You know, HaShem is displaying His greatest love, presenting them with the Promised Land, and they said that He hated them and they wept?!

And the Talmud tells us that God says, "You wept in vain. I will establish for you weeping for all generations." I always think of my father when I was a kid. He said, "You're going to cry? That's going to make you cry? I'll give you a reason to cry." And so was born the 9th of Av. And we've been crying about it ever since. And to the degree that just in a few days, Jews from all around the world and many non-Jews, also, I've come to understand. Will be sitting on the floor and fasting and weeping on the 9th of Av, which falls out this coming Wednesday, it's actually Wednesday night at sundown it begins and it's all day through Thursday.

In other words, the sin of the spies was the source of all of our troubles and our persecutions, our pain and our exiles. And what was this sin? Despising the Land of Israel and failing to summon within ourselves the faith, the faith that we needed to embrace this precious gift with open arms. Because that's what it came down to. The nation was lacking the simple faith that was needed to enter the Land of simple faith. Right? The Land of Israel is the Land of simple faith. The Land surrounded by enemies seeking our destruction on all sides. It was like that in biblical times and it's like that today. Enemies far mightier and more numerous than us. Even today we're surrounded by 22 Arab states, 57 Muslim states. You know many of them, much larger, out-number us. Each one individually, let alone all of them together. They have more weapons, they're mightier than us on paper at least.

You know, the Land of Israel, the Land that didn't have a reliable body of water like Egypt had with the Nile. No the Torah tells us that the Land of Israel, "Drinks water from the rain of the skies." It depends on rainwater falling from heaven. It's vulnerable, all of our faith needs to be in God. Every aspect of the Land of Israel – from the topography to the rainfall, are divinely tailored for one purpose – the primary function of the Land of Israel is to be a place where the nation of Israel can nurture and develop an intimate relationship with God. And therefore, by rejecting the Land, we were rejecting our relationship with HaShem, Himself. It was like HaShem was asking us to marry Him and move in and we were saying, "No!" That's what Tehila was saying to Jeremy, right? That's it's constantly, constantly a test that's ongoing. All of life is a

test that's ongoing. And when you're living in the Land of Israel, that test is so real. More real than anywhere else.

You know I'm sure that if He asked anyone of those ten spies, "Do you believe in God?" They would have said, "Of course, of course I believe in God. No question." But when it came down to the true gauge of that faith, their actions revealed that in truth, they didn't. At least not completely, at least not internalized.

And so how do we rectify that faithlessness? Well the great Rabbi known as the Akeidat Yitzchak from Spain said it perfectly. He said, "Despising the Land is the issue that has risen up in every generation to destroy us. Because while we were in exile from our Land, driven far from our soil and have been a disgrace to our neighbors. There's actually no way to return to our perfected state except by returning to the Land." I mean this is why I...there's some Jewish groups that I offered to pay them to come out to the Farm just to deliver them this message. Nobody seems to have the courage to tell people something that they don't necessarily want to hear, but they need to hear. If it was faithfulness that led to our rejection of the Land, then it will only be through faithfulness regarding embracing and supporting the Land that will bring that fixing.

There was actually over the past couple of weeks, there's so many different couples and families that came out. One family came out and they were saying that we really want to live here, but there's this and there's that and the other thing. And I said, "Just spend one Shabbat." Because they come out to the Farm and it's like the Garden of Eden here. It's like a little taste of redemption. And it's not this way all throughout the Land. There's neighborhoods, not just a few families living on a crazy Camelot-like mountain-top. So I said, "Why don't you go to the city of Efrat and spend one Shabbat there. Just spend one Shabbat with different eyes. Not eyes of the tourists, but eyes of someone scouting out the Land to see the beauty in it, to see a place to live." And I set them up with a family there, and they said after Shabbat...they reached out and they said, "We are selling our home and we're moving to Efrat, we're moving to the Land of Israel." That's just one story. Just that alone...I was like, ok, I can die now. Just that in and of itself. Four beautiful children, such a sweet couple. And they're moving to the Land of Israel.

And so anyways, that faithlessness, that was the root of the sin that led to the very first 9th of Av. And while the circumstances were different, we see in the Haftarah, the portion of the prophets, that it was the same root of faithlessness and lack of internalization of the truth of HaShem that led to the further destructions on subsequent 9th's of Av.

So let's look at the Haftarah in the prophets in the book of Isaiah to understand how else that faithlessness can manifest and bring horrible tragedy and destruction upon us. So if you have

your Tanakh's open and near you, please open up to the book of Isaiah, chapter 1. I'll give you a second here.

So you can skim through the first ten verses. We don't have time to read it all. But he starts the prophecy with the rebellions of the children of Israel. You know HaShem has raised us up and exalted us among the nations, then we've decided to rebel against Him. But here's where it sort of cuts to the quick. Here's where it starts to hurt a little bit. It says in verse 10:

Hear the word of HaShem, O chiefs of Sodom. Give ear to the Torah of our God O people of Gomorrah.

Already, it's like, it hurts right there – to be called the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Why do I need your numerous sacrifices? Says HaShem. I am satiated with elevation offerings of rams and the choicest of fattened animals. And the blood of bulls and sheep and he-goats, I do not desire, when you come to appear before Me. Who sought this from your hand to trample My courtyards? You shall not continue to bring a worthless meal-offering. Incense of abominations it is to Me. New moons and the Sabbaths and convocations, I cannot abide mendacity with assemblage.

Mendacity. Let me see what that means here. He can't suffer this type of hypocrisy.

Your new moons and your appointed festivals, My soul hates. They've become a burden upon me that I am wary of bearing. And when you spread your hands in prayer I will hide my eyes from you, even if you were to increase prayer, I do not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, purify yourselves, remove the evil of your doings from before My eyes, desist from doing evil. Learn to do good, seek justice, strengthen the victim. Do justice for the orphan, take up the cause of the widow.

It's powerful. You know, it doesn't say, "You're not keeping the laws of kosher, of kashrut correctly, you're not doing these different rituals correctly." No because it's easy to do rituals without faith. You just perform them faithless. But what is a real gate he says? To do good, seek justice, strengthen the victim, do justice for the orphan, take up the cause of the widow.

Let's skip ahead to verse 24, it ends with hope. There's mercy here. We can only take so much.

Therefore the word of the Lord, Master of Legions, mighty One of Israel. O how I will ease Myself of my adversaries, and how I will avenge Myself of my enemies. I will return My Hand upon you and refine as with lye your dross and I will remove your base metal.

Meaning that we're going to be refined. And we know that often that refinement is through pain.

Then I will return your judges as in the earliest times. And your counselors as at first. After that you shall be called the City of Righteousness, Faithful City. Zion shall be redeemed with justice and her returnees with righteousness.

That is powerful. That's a powerful, powerful vision of Isaiah. That's what it's called, the Sabbath of Vision.

I recently saw this debate with Dennis Prager. I don't know why, I used to see him as such a hero to me. And now I just disagree with him on so many things. And without going into all the details, he makes a point that Judaism is a religion of action. That we're judged by what we do and not by what we profess to believe. And it doesn't matter so much even what we believe. It matters what we do. And I remember being raised believing that as well, I think because he said it and he was such a force in my family. But I think that he's making a fundamental mistake there. Or even more than a fundamental mistake, it's a misrepresentation. It's misinformation and disinformation...I'm just kidding. I can't stand it when people say that stuff. But anyways, it's a misrepresentation. Because yes, what we do IS ultimately what matters the most. But only BECAUSE what we do is a manifestation of what we BELIEVE. Our actions are expressions of our belief system.

And I've seen way too many people say words that indicate that they believe that HaShem created the world and that He runs the world and that everything is for the best. But their actions and behaviors don't seem to be faithful expressions of the words that they say. I should know. I've been that person enough times in my life to know what it looks like. I'm sure even now there are parts of me that have that same hypocrisy, so I am definitely not throwing stones being that I have my own little glass house that I'm living here in. But there are those who may say that they believe HaShem is a God of charity and kindness and compassion. But their extortions and corruptions reveal that they really believe that the real law of the world is survival of the fittest. And that might make right. You know their actions so that they really believe that the law of the jungle, the law that only the strong survive, that's the real world. Come on. You know life isn't a devar Torah. You got to live in the real world and you gotta do what you gotta do. You know, doing what we're doing...we're playing a big game out here! There's a lot on the line and I see a lot of this stuff.

So it doesn't really matter what they say or what they profess. HaShem knows what's in our hearts. He fashioned us in the womb. If you really believe, I mean you really believe that HaShem runs the world, then it doesn't matter what the cost may seem to be to you personally. You will tithe and you will give charity, even if you don't feel like you have charity to give, even if you don't feel like you have the tithes to give. You will feed the hungry, you will clothe the

naked, you will defend the defenseless in a world of the jungle, right? Weakening your own position by casting your lot with the poor and the weak and the defenseless. You know in the jungle it can be a death sentence. If your posse, your tribe are the weak and the defenseless, you're very vulnerable there. But in a world run by the God of Israel, orchestrated and designed by the God of Israel, then supporting the widows and feeding the orphans, that is the only way to true life. That is the gauge which truly reveals whether our faith has been internalized and infused into our hearts and our actions.

Whether we, for example, embrace the Land of Israel, and stand with the nation of Israel. Despite the fact that doing so could have consequences which many times in history could cost us our lives. You know I get a lot of messages from many of you. I know about the price that you've paid. Most of you socially, in your families and in your communities for standing with Israel and for believing in the God of Israel as you believe. I know you've paid a price for that. There's a cost to it. Whether we leave the exile when the time comes...you know, and we embrace this Land surrounded by dangers and threats from without and within. That is a gauge of our real faith. Or whether we say, "Come on. It's nice all this Torah talk about moving to Israel and aliyah. But the real world. You know I got a job here. I got a profession here. I got things going on here." People don't want to think about it like that, but really that's what it's about.

Whether our rules and our judgments on this earth are a true reflection of HaShem's rules and judgments above. Or whether we take bribes and pervert judgments in order to serve our own selfish interests resorting in the trampling of the helpless and the abuse of the defenseless. That is the gauge of whether we're for real. Whether we're for real in our faith. Whether it's not just words.

You know I remember there were times that Christians would say like...I met certain Christians and they said to me, "You just believe for a moment and you're saved." I'm like, "It doesn't matter what you do?" "No, you just say the words, 'I believe', and you're saved!" I'm like...that doesn't seem right. That doesn't seem true. But you know the same thing, really you can see a lot of that in Judaism itself. A lot of Jews go to the synagogue and say the words and say the things and they think just saying the words and doing the rituals, that that's enough. But it's not. It's putting our very lives on the line. Being willing to sacrifice everything for HaShem! That is what determines the difference between true faith and true love and true relationship and self-delusion and hypocrisy.

You know you go into any synagogue in the world on the 9th of Av and you'll hear, "We're not blaming Babylonians or the Greeks or the Romans for any of that, for our persecution, for the destruction of the Temple." Again and again. It is our sins that we were exiled from our Land and that our Temple was destroyed. Our hypocrisies that caused the destruction. Our sins and our betrayals and our faithlessness caused the loss of that relationship. So it's only our

faithfulness and our trust and our fidelity that can rekindle the relationship that we're mourning on this very day. To this very moment, that's what this is really all about.

So I want to talk about that mourning for a second. I want to share with you that when my father passed away, I felt then and I continue to feel a degree of mourning that I've never felt before in my life. And the intensity of it has helped me understand mourning in a way that I never understood before. In a way that I never could have understood before until I experienced it myself. And those of you that have really mourned, you know exactly what I'm talking about. And the greater and the deeper this mourning, the greater this truth is. Because I experienced it, I always understood mourning as a negative thing. As a tragic thing. As an unfortunate by-product, the other side of the sword. And unfortunate by-product of a loving relationship that's been lost. And I'm gonna try to do justice in trying to share this with you in words because it's still raw and real and I'm in the throes of experiencing it all right now.

But I'm coming to understand that mourning is not about enduring the pain of a relationship that's been lost. But rather it seems like it's the continuation of the evolution of that very relationship, but it's just taking on a different form. Does this speak to any of you? I'm starting to see that the relationship with my father, it's still there. And the pain that we feel is just a different manifestation of the very real love that is absolutely still there. You know the other day I was sitting down with my mother and we were talking about life and how she's feeling and how she's doing and the transitions. And she told me that she still speaks to my father regularly. You know, just in the house, just like day to day. Just talking to him, like he's in that beige recliner where he would often sit. And in the middle of our discussion, she just began to weep. And for those of you that know, maybe it's not for everybody, but for me, there's little in the world that shakes me to my core more, that is more painful than seeing my mother weep.

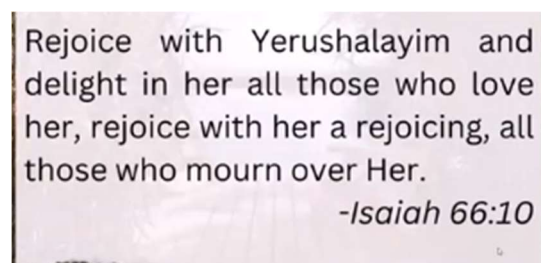
And at that very moment, I felt something that sort of took me by surprise. I felt happy for her. You know, happy that she had such a loving bond in her life, a bond that transcends space and time, a bond that clearly still exists because if it didn't, there wouldn't be anything to cry over. She wouldn't be crying, ok? He's gone, that's it, moving on. But here she is, weeping and crying. Does that make sense?

So this Shabbat as I was in the middle of prayer for services, it hit me like an ambush, unexpectedly. I just in the middle of services, I just began to weep. You know I've never used my prayer shawl, my tallit, in such a way before in my life. But I've found that it's become sort of a refuge for me. Not to cry, but to weep. I just threw the tallit over my head and I wept and at that moment I felt closer to my father than I did, sometimes I think even while he was alive, or at least in different ways.

You know Rav Kluger spoke to this feeling and gave an analogy to a woman whose husband left on a long business trip. And day in and day out she's just doing her thing. Staying afloat. You

know, taking care of the kids, taking care of the house. But once a day or so, you know, when they speak on the phone, at that moment, she sees this deep longing for him and a recognition of what a void his absence leaves in her life. You know that conversation that they're having, Rav Kluger explains, it's the hardest time in her day, but she wouldn't give up that connection for anything. No matter how painful it is, because that is when the connection happens. That's when the real connection happens.

That is the mourning of these nine days. That's what we're aspiring to here. That's what we're trying to dig really deep into connecting. That is the mourning of the 9th of Av. As we said before, we aren't mourning the structure of the Temple itself, but rather the depth and the closeness of the relationship with our beloved, with HaShem. The relationship that we don't have in the same way anymore. But as I felt this Shabbat, as I wept for my father, it's during that mourning when we come closest to HaShem, when we're weeping for HaShem, that's when we're closest. Isaiah says it in chapter 66, verse 10. It's actually a song, it starts off as a song:

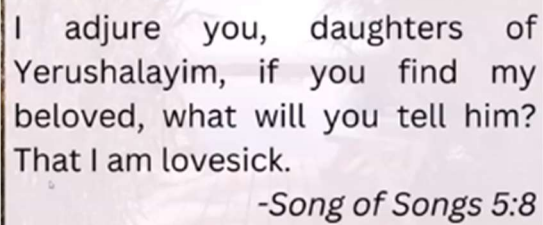


Did you catch that? Rejoice with her a rejoicing, all those who mourn over her. Those who are mourning, those are the ones who are rejoicing with her. Not necessarily in the same way as those who sow with tears will eventually reap with joy. It's not saying that. It's saying those who are mourning are rejoicing now.

Our sages teach, "All those who mourn over Jerusalem, merit to see her joy." But you got to really know the Hebrew for this one. Not that they WILL merit to see her joy in the future, but rather one who merits to mourn for Jerusalem sees her joy right then. In the present. In the moment of the true mourning. Meaning that while sometimes it's difficult to see because the pain and the yearning, it can be so crippling, it can be more than we can bear sometimes. There is joy within the mourning itself. The pain itself is a testimony that the love is still there and that we're still deeply connected.

And in that way, you know things have changed for me in my relationship with my father. You know at the beginning the pain was so great that I feared that I would never get through it. I feared that I would never get through the kaddish prayer without weeping. It's difficult to be in synagogue with 10, 20, 50, 100 men and to break out weeping as I'm saying the kaddish prayer. And I was afraid that I would never get through the kaddish prayer without weeping. I was afraid that the pain would never end. And now, you know if I'm afraid of anything, I'm afraid that it will. You know, I'm afraid that the pain will end because it is so much my relationship with my father now. And I've learned about my relationship with Jerusalem in that way. The

mourning for Jerusalem in that way. In Shir ha'Shirim, in the Song of Songs, there's a number of verses that allude to this, but I'm just going to skip now to chapter 5, verse 8:



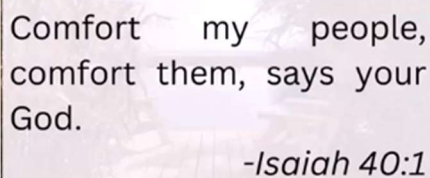
I adjure you, daughters of
Yerushalayim, if you find my
beloved, what will you tell him?
That I am lovesick.
-Song of Songs 5:8

Love sick. I'm love sick. When we think of the Temple, that is how we feel. A yearning, a pining, a love sickness for the relationship we had with HaShem that we've lost. And it's through that very pining away that we're able to really feel it. Even to touch it in the here and now. Our longing for closeness to HaShem is exactly that which generates

the closeness that we're longing for.

You know there's an old Chasidic tune that says, "Master of the World, I know that the third Temple will not be built with stones. It will be built with tears. So if all You need is one more tear, let it be one of mine."

You know the month of Av is called Menachem Av. Menachem means consolation. Now this can be read as Av, meaning the name of the month which is Av, is a month of consolation. Av, the month of consolation. Menachem Av, Av is the month of consolation. That's the simple way to read it. But it can also be read as, Menachem Av – Av meaning father, right? Abba, Av, is father. Because that's what the word means, meaning it's a month in which HaShem is asking us, His children, to console HIM. Menachem Av. In chapter 40 of Isaiah, we read a short, but powerful verse that we all know. You probably know different songs to it. Nachamu, nachamu ami...



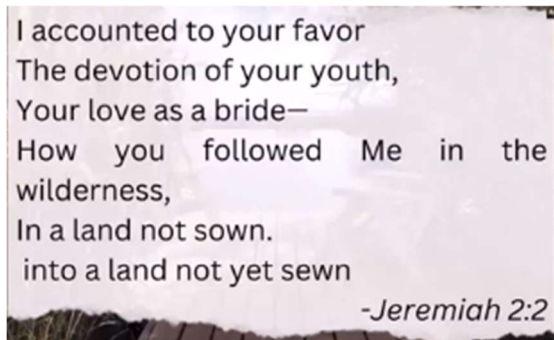
Comfort my people,
comfort them, says your
God.
-Isaiah 40:1

So the simplicity of that verse, that's true also. But at the very same time, on a deeper dimension, Rav Shlomo Carlebach brings a teaching that it could be read differently. The verse isn't a directive to comfort the Jewish people, but HaShem is pleading with us, "Nachamu, nachamu ami!" – Comfort Me, comfort Me, My people. HaShem is asking us

to comfort Him. He's asking us to comfort Him, He's asking us to console Him.

And so how can we do that? Perhaps it's with our tears. You know our tears are the ultimate testimony that we haven't forgotten Him, that we still long for Him and yearn for Him, just as He does for us. But He's not yearning for us alone, we're yearning for Him back. And that's the thing. Because you know you can say words and maybe they're from your heart and maybe they're not and maybe somewhere in between. But tears? You know it's hard to fake tears. I remember hearing someone say that the heart is frozen. And tears are the beginning of the heart melting.

You know, HaShem doesn't want empty gestures. He's disgusted by empty words and we see that right here in the book of Isaiah. He wants our love and He wants our faith. He yearns for the days when we followed Him into the wilderness as we read in Jeremiah. You know it says:



He yearns for that relationship. It's not only following HaShem into the desert. We have deserts all over the place in our lives. But we can follow HaShem there in faith. That's what He's yearning for, that's the Jerusalem that we're really talking about. He yearns for Jerusalem built upon truth, and established upon justice. A Jerusalem of faith. So I'm running out of time here, so I'm going to end with this so we have time to connect if anyone has

any questions, no pressure there. But if you do...

You know when Shaena and I got engaged, we of course discussed a ring. And it was a little bit nerve-racking for me. I did not have very much to my name, which is ok, that's fine. Financially I didn't, I still feel very rich, just not necessarily financially. But I wanted to be able to give her a beautiful ring. She deserves that. And I'll never forget, Shaena said, she told me that she knew I loved her. And that she didn't need a diamond ring to prove it. She didn't need anything expensive, a simple, sweet, sapphire ring, a sapir even, which as you know has the spiritual allusions to God's throne, to the spiritual heavens. That's what she wanted, a sapphire ring that doesn't come anywhere near the price of a diamond ring, that's all her heart desired. And I was really so moved by this and it really was just another confirmation that she was right for me.

And so I had more money left over than I thought I would and so I don't know if you guys remember this, but I surprised her with a helicopter ride, which took us over the Temple Mount itself.



So here's a picture of us right as I was asking her to marry me. I asked her to look out that window, if you could see it there, to look out that window at the Temple Mount. You know and as we hovered there, in the helicopter, over the Temple Mount, I remember saying to her, I said...probably not exactly these words, but I said, "You know, Shaena, as we know, the spiritual Temple is already built. It's hovering up here in the heavens, just waiting to come down to earth. Please Shaena, marry me. And

together we can build a family in Judea in the Land of Israel, a family established upon love for HaShem. And faith in HaShem. And may our family be that final brick in the Temple that will

bring the Temple down from the spiritual realm to the physical realm. To bring light and love and peace. To bring HaShem, to bring godliness to the entire world.”

And so, spoiler alert! She said, “Yes!” And that was great, that was great! So to bring it full circle, you know just as there are two different shamayim’s, you know the sky and the heavens, there are two of everything. Including two dimensions of Jerusalem, Yerushalyim shel matta and Yerushalyim shel mallah, as the sages teach us. Jerusalem the physical and spiritual worlds. There’s also two dimensions of the holy Temple, itself. And it’s our mission in this world to keep our feet rooted here in this world, on earth, in the material realm as material realm as it gets in the real world, to keep our feet rooted here. And through living our faith and living our trust, we can serve as a living testimony to the living God of Israel. You know and by living that test, by being that living testimony, we are merging the two worlds, we are uniting the physical with the spiritual, which our sages say in the most mystical realms, that is what HaShem’s yearning is. For us to serve that, to bring the spiritual world into the physical.

So the other day, I don’t know even know why I’m sharing this so much. Shaena and I were taking the kids to the zoo in Jerusalem. And Dvash, for those of you who are new, she is our first child from that heavenly engagement up there in the clouds. She is my daughter who I love more than life itself. And she was in the back of the car talking to Shiloh. And we said, “We’re going to Jerusalem,” and she said, “Shiloh, Shiloh, we’re going to Yerushalyim shel zahav!” We’re going to Yerushalyim shel zahav. What does that mean? She said, “We’re going to the Jerusalem of Gold.” She never just calls it Yerushalyim. She always says, “We’re going to the Jerusalem of Gold.” That’s what she calls it. That’s what she calls it. We don’t call it that, we call it Yerushalyim. She says, “We’re going to the Jerusalem of Gold.” It’s almost as if she can already sense it. It’s almost as if she knows that Jerusalem is not just a city, but it’s the city of gold, it’s the city of HaShem, it’s the city that shall be called, as Isaiah said, the city of righteousness, the faithful city. May that day be soon.

So now, I want to bless us that this year, we fulfill the vision of Zecharia. He says, “So says the Lord of Hosts, the fast of the 4th (meaning the 17th of Tammuz) and the fast of the 5th (the 9th of Av) and the fast of the 7th (the fast of Gedaliah) and the fast of the 10th (the 10th of Tevet) will be for the house of Judah joyous and happy festivals. When we’re really able to experience this mourning, the 9th of Av, the sages say, will be when Messiah is born. Whatever that means, I’m not sure what it means, if it means actually physically born. But redemption will be born from the heights of that grief, if we let our hearts experience that mourning. So may our faith in HaShem rekindle HaShem’s faith in us and may we see the 3rd and final Temple, the House of Prayer for all nations, for all of the nations, where we will all be there together, side by side. May we see that Temple rebuilt speedily an in our days, Amen. Amen.

Ok, now hang on my friends, we’re going to end this Fellowship with my blessing to you. But it’s going to be followed immediately by a beautiful song sung by the holy Rav Shlomo Carlebach,

himself. And this song always touches my heart. I may have even played it for you in the past, but it touches me so deeply. But after that, hang on tight because for those of you who want to connect, we're going to open up with the Fellowship Connection. So hang on tight. And if you do have questions, raise your hand so Tabitha can see. So we have a reason to hang on for afterwards. So either way, whether I see you afterwards or not, it's my great joy to bless you the blessing with which the High Priests blessed and continue to bless the nation of Israel every day. And the blessing with which they will soon gather in the courtyard of the Temple itself and bless us all, bless the entire world.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

May HaShem bless and protect you. May He shine His countenance upon you and may He give you peace. Amen.