

Session 148

Eikev – The Torah Law of Cause and Effect

6 August 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2gZunUTC3s>

Jeremy

Shalom everybody. Welcome to the Land of Israel Fellowship. It's great to see you all, so good to see you all. It's summertime in the Land of Israel. Things are hopping. It's beautiful hot days, cool nights on the Arugot Farm. And you know, last week, my family, we went away. All the kids are out of school and we took my extended family which is my two brothers and their wives and their kids, all the grandkids, all the cousins to celebrate my father's 80th birthday. And you know, I've learned so much from both of my parents, but they taught me more through their lives than through any formal teaching or chavruta that we had. And they're just so happy together. You know they've been through so much together. They've been through amazing good times and devastating hard times. I mean my parents are in their 80's now. And they're just happiest when they're together.

And I have a little sign in our house, on the Arugot Farm, in our home in our living room that used to hang up in my parent's kitchen, all the way back in Atlanta, Georgia. And it's a picture of a cat that is kind of wheeling in a little carriage, a dog. And then it says underneath that, "Happiness is being married to your best friend." And I think that that is just an absolutely beautiful Torah. That Adam and Eve were brought together to become a new union. And my parents are just a reflection of that. You know, I've never seen my parents fight. I'm 43 years old, my brothers are now 50 plus, and none of us have ever seen my parents fight. That's not normal, I get that. But Tehila's parents, they're also actually best friends, but they have a different kind of communication. They communicate in a fight. They're whole communication is one big fight. And it's like the Shabbat table sort of sounds like, "Pass the challah and why do you have to wear that silly hat. It makes you look ridiculous." And then he'll say like, "I'm going to be buried in this hat next to you for all of eternity." They're just constantly like sort of like fighting, bickering, kidding, joking with each other, but it's like a constant sort of cat and mouse game that they're playing with each other.

And when Tehila and I got together, imagine a family that never fights to a family that only fights. And I would just say like the cultures clashed when Tehila and I first got married. And we just see all the time that our marriage and our life and our children, we are in so many ways, fixing our family tree. And I think that that's such a beautiful idea that's kind of like.... marriage is this spiritual climb. Not just in our own lives, but really it's a generational climb. And we can shield our children from some of the things that we experience and fix those things that we wanted and slowly we're really raising, we believe, the generation that's going to bring a new era into the world.

And Tehila is going to talk about that. But before that, I wanted to say “Mazel tov!” to our dear friend, Renea Duprey who is now engaged and soon to be married in Colorado. That is amazing. We see here...is she here? Where’s Renea? Is she on-line? I didn’t see her? Are people are pointing to her? I thought maybe. A lot of the time she’s on. But today I don’t see her. That’s ok. I’m sure she’ll be tuning in next week, or later on in the week. But that is a very happy time. Renea is amazing. She lived on our Farm. She was on the Arugot Farm for awhile in our home. With us in the transition to the Farm, she’s just a dear member of the Fellowship, a dear friend of ours and that is such good news that she found a Torah-living person that wants to dedicate his life to God, dedicate his life to her, and that is just happy times for all of us.

And so, with that, I wanted to open our Fellowship with a prayer. And I can’t tell you how special these moments are for me. You know, I’m soon going to be releasing my book called “Waking Up, the Ancient Judean Way to Start Your Day,” as a full complete book. It was an e-book that kind of came along with my original album. But now I’ve worked on it for about a year and a half, it’s about 60% bigger than the original e-book. And it’s now just a proper sefer. And it really is a book on biblical prayer, just on Jewish prayer, on Hebrew prayer, on the discipline of prayer, on the spiritual practice, on the benefits, on really what are we trying to do? What are we trying to achieve?

And you know, I live in the mountains where King David wrote the prayers that every Catholic, and every Christian, and every Protestant, and every evangelical, and every Noachide, and every Ephraimite, and every Jew. It’s like the whole world, King David taught the whole world how to actually pray to God, and those prayers came into the world in the mountains around the Arugot Farm. And so finally to be able to share those insights into prayer with the world is really exciting. And the fact that HaShem has somehow chosen all of us, I was just watching the chats here. From Norway and Europe and America and Africa and just all over the world. We have an opportunity to all come together and it’s through this place and through this Land, connected to each other, lift up one prayer, unified to God. That is such a revolutionary idea. And it’s literally a taste of the geulah, it’s like a taste of what the 3rd Temple will be, it’s like a virtual House of Prayer for all nations. And so, what an opportunity.

So HaShem, Master of the Universe. Here we are, all of us together, Your loyal Fellowship. Every week we gather here and we gather more and more people every week. More and more people are signing up. More and more people are joining this movement from all over the world. We come together and we connect to each other. We connect to each other through this Land, we connect to each other by the light of Your Torah. And by the light of Your Torah we’re trying to light our path through this world. We start our week off dedicating this time to You. Dedicating this time to our highest ideals, to the values we cherish. We want to put what truly matters most in our lives, first in our lives. We want our will to be Your will so that Your will will be done in our lives. Bless our farms in Judea that are in a daily struggle to guard Your Land. We’re on the frontlines protecting Your people, and the future of our people in the Land

of Israel. Bless our Fellowship, the people who are alive right now, the people around the world who will be tuning in soon. Thank You for allowing us to reflect Your vision for the world in our generation. Thank You for choosing us to be of the first people to live as this example for our children and future generations to see. Bless every family that's a member of this growing movement. Shine Your light in their lives. Guide them on their paths, connect us all through Your capital, Jerusalem. And help us shine a new light from Zion to light up the darkness of this world. Amen.

Alright my friends. So a little bit about the Arugot Farm. Shabbats are long and relaxing. There's no where to go, there's no where to be. They're just amazing. And Tehila and I are learning together and reading books to the children together. And you know, all of the kids now are out of school in Israel. And so people from all over the country are coming to visit the Farm and outside of the people of Israel, people from all over the world are coming. And it's just so special to be the stewards of this holy place that somehow attracts the most unique people because people that come from outside of Israel, they have ten days, two weeks. How much time do they have on this voyage, this trip, this pilgrimage, this vacation that they have to Israel? And of all the places that they could go, they choose to go to the deepest Jewish settlement in Judea, to go and explore the Arugot Farm and find out what's happening there. And so it attracts the most marvelous people.

So there was a Jew that stayed for Shabbat, a super successful business man, not the most religious person in the world. But spiritual and religious enough to make it to the Arugot Farm for Shabbat. And what a beautiful soul. And you know, he joined me and Noam, my 8-year-old shepherding on Shabbat morning. Shabbat morning is my shift and me and Noam would go out into the mountains. Often Emunah, my 10-year-old will join us. But Noam...it's like he wakes me up in the morning. He wants to go shepherding out with his Abba. And so, Noam came, and then he decided to come with us. And we didn't do anything special. We took the sheep through the valleys and we talked about the parsha, and we davened together. We threw the baseball around and we just goofed around the sheep. We were just shepherding the sheep out in the mountains. That's what we like, quality time that I have with my 8-year-old.

And I told this guy all about our Fellowship and he was just stunned...blown away. And as we were walking back from shepherding the sheep, we were out there for about three hours, he told me that spending the morning in the mountains with us and the sheep was in the top ten happiest times of his life. And I just...I didn't know what to do with that. I was just out shepherding sheep like I do every Shabbat morning. And what a blessing, what an opportunity, what a merit we have to be able to be the custodians of this mountain, and to be able to be the Abrahams of this tent that just brings in these guests. We don't know who they are, we don't know where they come from, we don't know what their backgrounds are. And it's just like open to the public. Whoever wants to experience it, it seems like we're just really lucky because everyone that I see, that comes to the Farm is just touched in their heart, filled with a certain

light. And it's only getting stronger. Our Fellowship is getting stronger, our Farm is getting built, we're now creating new farms in Judea.

And I'm not saying that it's not a struggle. I mean, everything that's worthwhile in this world is a struggle. Everything you have to work for. There is no simple path. But we just feel like we are building something so unique in the world, it really feels like a little bit of the taste of the geulah. We're like building a small portion of God's kingdom and bringing this light that didn't exist before into the world. And it's not just virtual, it's physical, in the Land of Israel, in the mountains of King David, like Wow!!

And so, with that, I want to introduce you to really one of the most interesting people that I know in the world. It's never boring in my house because I'm married to Tehila. She constantly has interesting things to say and she's constantly challenging me and constantly teaching me, and she's just such a blessing in my life, she's a blessing in this Fellowship. And the conversations that we had over Shabbat will inspire this entire Fellowship. But because she is the source of the inspiration, I want her to lay the foundations, and then from what she's going to teach, I'm going to go through the parsha and then we're going to build an entire structure from her foundations that she's going to lay. Because I think that her insight is just spectacular, brilliant, and you will absolutely love it. So here is the wonderful Tehila for you all.

Tehila

Hi guys, so you know this past portion of Eikev, there's an interesting blessing that we get IF we listen to the Torah. It says in verse 14, "You shall be blessed above all peoples. There shall be no sterile male or barren female among you or among your livestock."

It's a very striking blessing when you think about it. It doesn't say, "You'll be fruitful, you'll multiply." It says that if we listen to the commandments and if we listen to the Torah and we follow HaShem's path, there will be no barrenness. Now on the one hand it's like an amazing blessing, on the other hand, the whole Torah tells us stories of extraordinary righteous people who struggled with their fertility. I remember I once had a woman speaking to me and she just burst out crying saying, "I had a miscarriage and I'm struggling with my fertility. The Bible says that if we listen to the commandments, there will be no barrenness."

And of course I told her, on the contrary. The midrash tells us that HaShem gave challenges to our matriarchs of yearning for children because they were the most beloved. Our matriarchs started the nation of Israel. It wasn't a sign that they weren't worthy of being mothers. It was because they had to go through those challenges to become who they were meant to be. So it could be that this blessing is speaking about future messianic time, but at the same time, I want to see if it's something that we could relate to right now. Maybe there's a message for us here.

And you know, the first word of this portion, Eikev, that word, eikev, it's a word that in Hebrew means "cause and effect." It's like it stems naturally. What stems naturally from this kind of righteous path that we're told to walk on? What could be the prophetic message for us here? It struck me that there seems to be a process going on, a spiritual evolution. If in the past there was sort of survival of the fittest that favored whoever was the strongest or the smartest, if you were a good hunter you were smart at evading predators, then you'd have more babies that survive, more than the other guy. And so you would pass on your genes.

Today with all the technology, lowered infant mortality, it seems that we've moved into something else. Something of a survival of the most spiritually inclined. If we look around the world, even though life is easier in every way, even though there are countless technologies to help infertility, even though people have more of a social, financial network than ever before. Even though we have more food, almost everyone in the Western world has shelter, you would think that families would be exploding. But they're just disappearing. And it seems that the world is dividing into two groups. Those who believe in raising the next generation and those who don't. I'm sure it's not a surprise to any of you. This is something that many people speak about. Birth rates are declining all over the developed world. And as the world becomes more educated and more wealthy, birth rates decline. We're at a point right now where in the eastern world – China and Japan, Korea, demographers predict that in 270 years, the populations will be 2% of what they are today. From a historical perspective, 270 years is not even that much. And the world as we know it will be totally different.

But it doesn't even take that long. Europeans in 60 or 70 years, in about 70 years are going to be 60% less in population than what they are now. And some will say, "Well there are rises and falls in birth rates, this might change." Historically there has never been a population that dropped below replacement rate and still managed to recover. It hasn't happened, so it's hard to imagine that it will suddenly happen out of nowhere in the secular industrialized world. And as more of the world becomes educated and industrialized, as it's easy to imagine that this trend is going to continue.

Now instead of fighting this implosion of humanity, we see that the strong and the powerful, the economic forces in the world are actually pushing this agenda. And they don't even hide the reason. There is actually a deep hatred of humanity underlying decisions being made by world leaders today. Take for example, you all know Harari, the Israeli professor and author who is the highest level advisor to Klaus Schwab, to the head of the World Economic Forum, bringing together the strongest and most powerful people who make policy plans for the world. He doesn't hide what he really thinks. He tells us straight forward. There's a great quote of him. You all know Harari, he says, "The useless class," this is how he titles his speech, "The most important question in the 21st century economics may well be, what to do with all the superfluous people. What will conscious humans do once we have highly intelligent, non-conscious algorithms that can do almost everything better."

Does this mean that they constantly talk about humanity is actually a burden? Now if this is what the powerful, elite, secular leadership really thinks, then what is left for us to do is to look at things that are happening in the world through that prism to make them make sense. When you look at the war on simple biological truths, the war on marriage, the war on men being men and women being women, making families, you say, "What the heck is going on? Why is this happening?" But then you say, "Oh, if the purpose is to lessen humanity, then everything makes sense."

Ok, then you might say, "Surely the environmentalists, they care about our health and want to help us flourish, right?" Hmm, well interestingly you can see that everyone seems to focus on carbon emissions, but then conveniently ignore other parts of the environment. Like all the plastics and the chemicals in the water and the food that are messing with everyone's hormones. Ok, well surely the medical organizations of the world, health organizations, they want to help humanity flourish. Ok, well wait. Are they the ones ignoring all the vaccine side-effects on female cycles and fertility? Oh no, well surely the technology companies want us to flourish. Well, maybe if they're encouraging young people to live on-line and be on dating apps that encourage short, meaning-less relationships instead of getting married and starting families.

If you go one powerful secular institution to the next, suddenly not everything is a head-scratcher anymore. Everything actually works in a convenient direction. Jordan Peterson often quotes Jung that if you can't figure out what is motivating someone in what they're doing, look at the outcome of their actions and then infer backwards and figure out the original motive. So if we see this happening before our eyes, the world being divided between the secular vision of basically wiping out humanity, save but of course the few wealthy and powerful and useful people, on the other hand, we see that people of faith are the only ones actually continuing to build families and they're the ones that are going to build future generations.

And what is really interesting is to look at Israel on this. Because the verse in our portion says that Israel will be blessed above all nations, in a different way from all the other nations. And there will be a special blessing of not having barrenness. What could that mean? Every demographer in the world is talking about the relationship between education and fertility. The more educated people are in a certain country, the less children that country has. And every time they write it, you'll see a little asterisk or a little footnote saying, "Except there's this one exception." Israel here is the absolute single outlier that no one can seem to explain with regular scientific tools. Little ole Israel is known as the Israel fertility paradox. Because even though Israel is one of the most educated countries in the world, you don't see a drop in childbirth that you see in every other country that comes along with education.

Even if you look inside Israel, it's not entirely true. The Muslim birthrate plummets with education. In 1960, Israeli Arabs had an average birthrate of 9 children per family. And now it's

3. The paradox is only in the Jewish population where you see continuously high birth rates unrelated to education. You might say, "Oh, it's just those ultra-orthodox Jews." No. Even secular, mildly traditionally families in Israel have far more children than secular people anywhere in the world. Something about the biblical values that run even deeper, maybe in someone's conscious identity, that biblical ethos that's in our blood...it just goes so deep that it gives us a love of family and of humanity.

There's this one article that came out...there's a lot of articles that discuss this. But there's one article from the Canadian National Post that I just love that I wanted to read you guys a little excerpt from. It says, "When surveyed, Israelis said that the ideal family size is three, but in America, Europe, Australia, the ideal family is two. I have a lot of friends in Canada," says the author, "who say that they want to be child-free by choice or be one and done. But those concepts have not entered into the Israeli discourse. Why both moderately religious and non-religious couples are choosing to procreate so often in Israel is a mystery to demographers because it is in opposition to the trends in Europe, North America, and Asia. The real secret to Israel's fertility rates appear to be cultural. The family is at the absolute center of Israeli life. Getting married and having kids is the highest cultural value. Any Jewish person in Israel or in the diaspora will attest to the immense pressure to marry, as if a great tragedy has happened to you if you have had the misfortune of remaining single past 26. But most importantly, children are seen as a blessing and not a burden. I often hear my Canadian friends talk about the cost of having children and the terrible impact that humans have on climate change, but I've never heard an Israeli do the same. Israelis simply lack the kind of nihilism seen along young Canadians today about the future," says this Canadian journalist.

"Despite the fact that they live in a Land where they know that they will have to send their children into the army at 18, they aren't afraid to bring children in the world, but they believe that the only way to make a better world is to have children. To many Israelis, children represent life. And only life brings hope."

I thought that was a great article, a great sanctification of HaShem's Name in the totally, secular, Canadian media where people are trying to figure out the meaning of this Israeli paradox. What's interesting is that it's not only Israel. You see that among Bible-believing people, there is still faith in family that hasn't been influenced by this Western ideology, no matter how much they pummel us with movies and books and articles and none of it is really affecting true, Torah believers. And there are pockets all over the world of people that see raising a family as the greatest privilege, not a burden. And they follow the example of Israel wherever they are in the world.

And so it seems that the world is shifting to a situation where those who believe in the meaninglessness and uselessness of humanity and life are actually voluntarily opting out of the world, out of the world itself. And shrinking themselves down. And there's a sifting process

that will taking place over the next decades, maybe the next centuries, where those who are spiritually inclined, those who see humanity as a gift, those who see having a life of purpose, of meaning, of giving to others, a life of service, those people are going to have the natural tendency to grow and it fits so beautifully with the opening word of the portion. Eikev. It says this is not a grand miracle given to us by HaShem. It's the natural cause and effect. If you live by the Torah, you will feel this love of life, this hope toward future generations. You'll want to raise children into this beautiful world that HaShem has given us.

I once heard this great parable, I think by Rabbi Teller, if I'm not mistaken. And he gives this imagery of this over-stuffed emergency room, just patients everywhere, moaning and groaning and suffering. And there's a guy running toward the emergency room. And someone sitting outside of the door says, "Don't go in there you crazy person. It's hell in there. Do you know what's going on in there? There's people bleeding, it's overcrowded. People are suffering, people are screaming. You don't want to go in there, buddy. If you go in there, you're just going to be adding to the chaos." And then the guy shows him his nametag and says, "Oh, I'm a doctor. I'm here bringing medicine and treatments."

And the person outside the emergency room says, "Oh you're a doctor. I'm so sorry to have delayed you. Go on in. Go in fast. They really need you!"

So it's like, that's how Torah believers see having children. Secular people say, "Who wants to bring children into the world? It's too crowded. Don't bring people. It's going to cause climate change. It's just going to make things worse. You're a nut to have a family. Look at all the suffering in the world."

But a Torah believer says, "Don't worry. Look at me, I'm a doctor. We're not here to add to the chaos. We're here to bring the medicine to the chaos." That's how we see our families. That's how we raise our families, for a life of service to better the world. But people who have no meaning or no mission can't understand that. Because if they can't guide themselves to a life of service and mission, they certainly can't imagine having enough to give over to a child. So they just opt out. That's the natural outcome. And in the end, what the world really needs is those doctors. For people to fill up their chests of medicine by learning as much wisdom and guidance from the Torah so that we can pass that down to the next generation to be healers of the world. And as we do that, the blessing of this week's portion is just the natural out-pouring of that. So may there be no barren one among us, but rather a love of life, a love of humanity that keeps us centered and focused on our families as the core value in our lives. So with that I wish everybody a great week. Bye guys!

Jeremy

Thank you, Tehila, that is just too interesting. It's too interesting that all of these things came out right as we're reading this parsha. And you know people say that the big concern is the

over-population, where in reality the biggest concern for Western civilization today is the population collapse that people are not having enough children and then what is going to be in the world if there's not going to be a future generation? I mean, the people in Italy are having, I think, less than one child per couple at this point. They're just disappearing. I mean if everyone just decides to not have children, that will be the end very quickly.

And if you read the portion, look at what it says. It's just so interesting. If you open up to chapter 7, verses 12 and 13, the very first verses of the Torah portion:

And it will be, because you will heed these ordinances and keep them and perform, that the Lord, your God, will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers.
And He will love you and bless you and **multiply you.**
-Deuteronomy 7:12-13

Eikev, it's like cause and effect. It's like I want you to pay attention to that. First, that's beautiful to know. It's like God created the universe and all of these galaxies. It's like, wow, there's people that are choosing to live the moral life, choosing the good life, choosing integrity. He loves those people. But not only that, blesses them and multiplies them. Multiplies them!

And then, chapter 8, verse 1 He says it again, just in case you missed it:

Every commandment that I command you this day you shall keep to do, that you may live and **multiply.**
-Deuteronomy 8:1

Now just so you know, as Tehila and I were sort of studying the demographics, in 50 years from today, Israel will have more Jewish men and women between the ages of 20 and 50, that's the fighting age in the military, than every European country in the world. So imagine that. When my grandfather first walked from Russia to Israel, there were 60,000 Jews in the Land of Israel at that time, in 1916. And in 50 years from today, Israel is going to have arguably the largest military in all of Western civilization, from Israel to Europe. That's unbelievable. And what is the Torah saying? You keep it close to the Torah and you'll be multiplied. I'll multiply you.

And what is the opposite of multiplying? It's like those who like disconnect, they're going to depopulate. It's just a cause and effect. It's just the reality. Now here's what's interesting. The Torah never claims to understand God. It never tries to pose questions and answer them like, "I don't know." I mean look at the book of Job. It's just a mystery. And we live within the mystery. We don't understand it all. But...aside from posing HaShem echad, which is pretty much the only philosophy of the Torah, God's oneness, there's really no other philosophy or theology that it imposes. BUT...it claims that there are rules for life that we can understand and that we can test. And they're no different than laws of physics or gravity.

Eikev – cause and effect. They are human laws, spiritual laws of behavior. If you walk in the path of righteousness, you will be blessed. You will multiply. If you veer from the path of good and venture into evil, you will be cursed. Not by God coming and cursing you, you are going to end up in hell. Hell on earth. Your life will become a living hell. And in that way, that promise of the rules, eikev, cause and effect, that way the Torah is a 4,000 year old scientific experiment. And it works.

Moses at the very beginning, he's teaching them throughout the book of Deuteronomy. Learn from the past. Look at what happened when you veered from the path of righteousness. Remember when you worshipped the golden calf, remember when you sent spies into the Land? Do you remember Korach? Do you remember all of those mistakes? The Torah today is much stronger. We have 4,000 years of scientific data. Empires rose and empires fall. The Romans, the Greeks, the Ottomans, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians. Pharaohs of Egypt rose and fell. They're all gone. But the Jews that were loyal to the Torah bested them all.

The Torah is a living testimony and the Torah speaks not only to the individual, but specifically to society. Not just the individual. It's like eikev t'shemu, when you in plural listen, you as a society need to adopt these principles individually, but collectively. While Western Christian writings are focused on a little bit more on personal salvation, the Torah is constantly talking to the people of Israel, to a society, to a country, to a Kingdom. And the expectation is that the society will function when each individual steps up to the plate.

And you know, you want to defund the police. You can do that. We can defund the police tomorrow, but if you want to do that, only thing that needs to happen...society needs to accept upon itself the Ten Commandments. If you have a social contract that every single person keeps the Ten Commandments, you practically won't have any use for police. So the world today, it's like, totally off kilter. It's almost like we have an ability to be plugged in to a power source. And it gives us a life force and it makes us want to have more life and give life and bring life into the world. And you can detach yourselves from the life force and just live on your own battery. But slowly that battery sort of peters out and it definitely doesn't have enough life force to bring new life into the world. Or maybe one more life. It's like if you're connected to the source, you're connected to the source of all life.

And today the world is like disconnected from everything that brings life. What are the most important things in life? What are the things that make us happy? They are our relationships. Our husbands and wives, our children, our parents, our brothers and sisters, our close family, our fellowship, our community. The world today is so lonely. No wife, no husband, no children, no community, no church, no clubs. I just read the most interesting study that showed that more people are bowling today in America than ever before. Bowling. You know where you roll the ball and hit the pins? But less than ever are joining bowling teams. No one wants to be on

a team. They just want to go bowling with themselves. Or maybe with another person. They don't want to be a part of a team, a club, a society. They want to be alone. It's like the "I" generation, it's "me" instead of "we." That's where we're at now.

And you know, I quote this study a lot. The Harvard study of adult development. It's arguably the longest term research project in the world. It explores what makes people happy in life. And the study followed 724 participants and their families since 1938, collecting data on their health and their relationships and their well-being. And the main finding of the study is that close relationships, more than money, more than possessions, more than security, achievements, academic degrees, fame...none of that. Close relationships are the thing that keeps people happiest throughout their lives.

And what is the world doing today? It's like separating itself from any close relationships. It's like the Bible says in the very first chapter, "It's not good for man to be alone. I'm going to make Adam and Eve a union. I'm going to make them come together." And there's a scientist, his name is James Fowler. And he's documented that just the impact of our social networks...and our social networks, that's why the Torah is constantly talking about the tribes, talking about our society. Imagine the way Israel is built. It's so brilliant. It's husband and wife, Abraham and Sarah. Then you have Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob. Then you have 12 sons. You have those 12 sons becoming tribes, communities inside the tribes. There's families that are within tribes. And then all of those things become a nation. It's like from the smallest it grows and grows. But the most important connections are husband and wife ultimately.

And what does James Fowler say? Listen, the people that you're around, the people that you associate with, your social circles? They are going to have a huge impact on who you are and on what you do. If your closest friends are overweight, you're probably also going to be overweight. If your closest circles around you, if they don't smoke cigarettes, you're probably not going to be smoking cigarettes. It's just an absolute life hack. Surround yourself with people that you admire. Surround yourself with people that you want to be like and just by being around them, you'll become more like them. It's like, you know what happens when you're a drug dealer? You hang around with other drug dealers and drug addicts. You know what happens when you're a member of the Fellowship? You hang around with the most amazing people on planet earth. And you hang around with the greatest souls of the world.

And imagine that. I bet Yuval Noah Harari that Tehila quoted would call a lot of us the useless class, because we're not a part of the elite, or whatever they see themselves as. Where in God's eyes, He never talks about the kings or the astronomers or the scientists. What does He care about? The orphan, the widow, the lonely, the poor, the down-trodden. He wants us to seek kindness and love in this world. And like, where is kindness, unity and love expressed greater than in our Fellowship? Like what a living example we are. Like a slap in the face to that secular

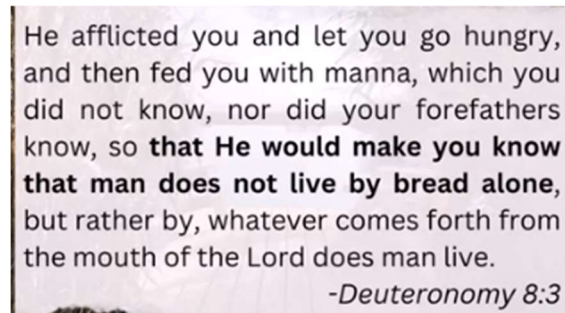
ideology. Surrounded by people that walk with God. When you walk in the world, you walk with them.

And so why are people living alone? And if they do commune with others, they usually hang around with the wrong people. I mean, how could these educated countries be making such stupid policies? So intelligent and so stupid at the same time. King Solomon said it first. "The beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord." And so if the world would adopt the Torah standard for living, there would be no more war. We wouldn't need armies, we wouldn't need police. Period. That's the way Israelites entered into Israel. Imagine there were hundreds of years. From Joshua, all the way until King Saul, where Israel had no king. There was no organized system. There wasn't a need for it because God was King. And if God is the King of your life and of your neighbor's life, you can leave your car key in the hatch, in the switch. No one is going to steal your car. Because God is King.

And so, imagine if the world were to adopt a Torah standard for living. There would be no more war, there would be world peace. And so that's our task ultimately. It's to bring the Torah from Zion to the world. And Ari and I, we've been talking about this a lot. We've been praying about this a lot. We've been thinking about this a lot. And this coming year, we have committed to taking our Fellowship to the next level. The Land of Israel network, and the backbone of the network, is our Fellowship. We are going to bring the light in a way like we've never done before. I mean we've built this amazing vehicle, this vessel, the Arugot Farm. And it's spreading and conquering the Land of Israel, slowly but surely. But ultimately, the spirit of this movement is us. It is the message, it is the Torah, it is the message and the light that emanates from Zion. And this coming year, we're now like getting ready for Elul. The commitment that we have this upcoming year is going to be the biggest, the best, the most dedicated year we've ever had toward teaching to this Fellowship. We're really going to try to take everything that we're doing to the next level and really shine a new light into the world. Please God, may that be so.

And so, let's continue on with what the Torah portion speaks to us directly in our lifetime. Because you know we talked about summertime is a good time for rejuvenation. And how do we do that? And to me the answer is...back to basics. Get back to the fundamentals. Get back to the basics of life. You get good at the fundamentals, everything else falls into place. But sometimes humans have this amazing ability to just complicate things. We're just much like...life is so multi-dimensional, there's just so many things to think about, so many things to do. It's like come back to the basics. And actually, that's what this Torah portion does for us. It summarizes, just back to the basics. This is the way to be. If you live this way, you will prosper, intergenerationally. It's not just talking about our own benefit, but the benefit of our children, of our grandchildren.

And so, let's continue. Look at what it says in chapter 8, verse 3. Moses is telling the story, trying to learn the life lessons. He's like summarizing the last 40 years of experience. And he's saying, this is what I want you to take with you into the Promised Land:



He afflicted you and let you go hungry, and then fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your forefathers know, so **that He would make you know that man does not live by bread alone**, but rather by, whatever comes forth from the mouth of the Lord does man live.
-Deuteronomy 8:3

And so, let that sink in for a little bit. God let us go hungry. And then He fed us the manna. Both of those were important lessons. One was to be able to walk in a time of hunger, to walk in a time of doubt. But to know that God will provide the manna in time. But, He would make us know that man does not live by bread alone.

What does that mean? So a nation without God cannot sustain itself. You think that the source of your physical reality comes from physicality? No way. From the bread that you eat? You think that the money that you have in your bank account, that's going to sustain you? The world has never been so prosperous and child birth has never been so low. Imagine that. Man does not live by bread alone. We have more bread than ever. I remember, it still blows my mind every time I go to the United States, I walk into Walmart. There is an entire row that is longer than the highway to Tel Aviv, and it's just stacked with different types of bread. Pita bread, and white bread, and sliced bread, and black bread, and brown bread, and processed bread. Every kind of bread that you could possibly think about, the abundance in our generation is beyond any abundance that any generation has ever experienced by far. In the olden days, do not eat the way a regular person eats at a Shabbat table nowadays. Go to a hotel in Jerusalem, the food there, kings did not eat such food. You go to a hotel in Jerusalem, eat the food that you have at the breakfast buffet. And so, what is it saying to us? Why is the Western civilization declining? Why is it disappearing? Why are they not multiplying? Cause that's what the Torah's teaching us right here. You cannot live by bread alone. You're going to unplug yourself from the source of life, you're going to lose life, itself.

You know, Viktor Frankel is one of my greatest inspirations. And he wrote a book, arguably one of the greatest books to ever be written. And it's called, "Man's Search for Meaning." I encourage everyone in the Fellowship to buy this book, to read this book. It is one of the most inspiring books, insightful books, powerful books to ever be written. He lived through the Holocaust, through Auschwitz, and he was a doctor of the soul, a therapist. And he found ways not only to survive the Holocaust, but to somehow help others. And he studied people – the people that committed suicide, the people that just gave up. But he also studied the people that found enough strength to give the little bit of food that they had to the person next to them.

So what made the difference? Why did this one person give up on life and kill himself? And how did this person find the resolve to share the little bit that he had to strengthen his friend?

And Viktor Frankel says it like this, “Being human is always directed in pointing to something or someone other than oneself, to a meaning to fulfill, to another human being to encounter. A cause to serve or a person to love.” What it is to be human is to be engaged with the other. You have a wife, you have a husband, you have parents, you have children. Once you are living with the gold being outside yourself, you’re living as a human. And he called that self-transcendence. And you achieve this by, this is a quote – “Not by concerning himself with himself, with his self-actualization. But by forgetting himself and giving himself, overlooking himself and focusing outward.”

And you know on the Farm this Shabbat, we had the Rabbi of the University of Baltimore, the campus Rabbi that came over for Shabbat. And he’s been a friend of mine for many years. And he came with his whole family. Just wonderful conversation. And he said that the most successful, popular class that he gave at the University of Baltimore was a class called Mitzvoh for Millennials. That’s what he called it. And he said, “What is the secret of that class? Millennials, the next generation that’s rising up today, the most fundamental, core question that everything is seen through this paradigm is...what’s in it for me?”

What’s in it for me. So he said, “Ok, so if that’s what they’re interested in, then I’m going to do a mitzvah class about what’s in it for you. And if they can’t find what’s in it for them? Then that mitzvah’s not going to be for them.” And that society that’s growing up in that culture is literally the opposite path toward happiness, toward meaning, toward fulfillment, toward everything that Viktor Frankel taught about. It’s saying, “No, no. You want to live a powerful life? You want to live a life of meaning? The meaning is not going to be about what it does for you. On the contrary. It’s finding something that you believe in or something that you love so much that you’re not even thinking about yourself anymore. You’re so focused on your children, you’re so focused on your wife, you’re so focused on Israel, you’re so focused on God. You’re so focused on helping others. You’re thinking about outward, outward.

And that’s when the blessing comes to you. It’s like such a brilliant catch 22 that the way that we achieve happiness is by specifically not trying to achieve happiness. Happiness is the outcome of our service to others. And so, where does that take us now? Obviously it takes us to the very next verse. Look at chapter 8, verse 5, I think this is critical. Cause this world is not an easy place. I feel like every week I awaken myself to a new challenge that God has placed before me. And sometimes the challenges will be so hard I would just get knocked out. And slowly but surely, over the years, I think through the prayers of this Fellowship, my emunah is stronger. But here’s what it says in chapter 8, verse 5:

You shall know in your heart, that just as a man chastises his son, so does the Lord, your God, chastise you.

-Deuteronomy 8:5

That's already beautiful. You need to know this, but you need to know it in your heart. This needs to be something that's like inside you, it's embodied knowledge. It's something that you don't just know, you are.

So listen Israel. You've been through a lot of challenges in this world. I mean, you've travelled 40 years through the desert. There were times when you didn't have food. There were times when you didn't have water. There were times when you didn't know where you were going. You've been through ups, you've been through downs, you've been enslaved, you've been through the wringer. Never forget. It's not random, and it's not tragic, and it's not the devil that got the best of God and somehow this tragedy fell upon you. It's not bad luck, it's a Father. Just as a father chastises his son, so does the Lord chastise you. It's a father correcting you, challenging you, coaching you, training you, He's guiding you in your life.

And so people that just want a life that's dedicated to me, me, me, what's in it for me? Wait a minute. Be ready cause life may deliver a lot more than you're expecting. You are going to be challenging, you're going to be brought to your knees in life whether you like it or not. You are going to be knocked on your back. The flood is going to come. It comes in everyone's life and it doesn't only come once. The flood is gonna come and what we can do is know that God is taking us on a ride. And if we build our ark, then we get to go on a cruise. And if we don't have an ark, we will be swept away in the waters of that flood.

But know that the waters, they didn't come tragically and they didn't come by accident. Those waters ultimately guided the ark to Jerusalem. The ark that finally found the olive branch. It guided them toward the dry land where they needed to be. And so when we realize that our purpose is to ultimately enter into the Promised Land of our lives, that this entire Torah is a template for us, we're all leaving Egypt, we're all traveling through the desert, we're all going to go through challenges, we're all gonna go through tests. All of this why? To enter into the promise of our own lives, to become the person HaShem created us to be. Then we know. Ok. We're going to have to travel through the desert. I better drink a lot of water. We're going to have to battle evil kings, we're going to have to go up against sorcerers and prophets that are gonna be against us. We're gonna have to confront high, fortified walls and conquer them. And for us to accomplish our mission to fulfill our destiny, we are going to have to grow.

And growth...what is growth? Growth is exactly what Israel experienced in the desert. It's taking on more than your current self can handle. Leaning into it. Leaning into the discomfort, leaning into the pain and then creating the character and developing the virtues that will make that level sustainable. And how do you do that? Habit, practice and skills. That's why the Torah is like...and this commandment, and this commandment. What are those commandments? There are so many. What are they all about? It's like, keep on practicing. Keep on practicing.

It's developing a new habit. As you give charity, you're becoming more giving, as you practice telling the truth, even when it would be easier to lie, you're becoming a man or a woman of truth. Keep on practicing truth, keep on practicing giving, keep on practicing serving. And all of a sudden, your soul is being revealed in the world. Pain, that's a fact. But in this scenario, suffering is a little bit more of a choice. Because if we lean into it, we realize we're being chastised, we realize we're just being coached, we're being trained, that we don't have to suffer. We can actually take that opportunity and grow from it.

And failure, I mean I told you, all of us are going to end up on our back. All of us, we're all going to be there once in awhile. But failure, that's par for course. Failure is structured into life. There are societies where failure is like...in Japan, if you fail you're out. It's like a shame on the family, it's a shame to your name. Torah says, "No, no, no. The tzadek, the righteous man, he fails seven times and he gets up." So think about that. I mean if you're lifting weights, I mean if you're building muscle, then you push until failure. It's like only when you push, until you fail...failure, ahhh, that's when you really succeed. When you've pushed yourself until you fail, that's when the muscle experiences optimal growth. So failure is what triggers growth.

So the real question is then a question of tshuva. When we fail, and that's what Deuteronomy is all about. You failed with the spies, you failed with the golden calf. You failed, you failed, you failed, you complained, you failed. I mean over and over again. The real question is, how long does it take us to recover? I mean, when you go to a doctor, one of the tests that they do is, they'll let you run on a tread mill. And they'll let you run for a few minutes. And they're not testing to see how fast your heart rate is when you're running. They're testing when you get off the machine. How long does it take for you to recover. How long does it take for your pulse to return to normal. That's actually the sign of health. And so it's not about failing. Failing, yeah, we're all going to fail. I fail all the time. The question is, "How fast am I going to get back up on that horse and realize that failure, that's also a part of the plan." HaShem pushed me to my failure in order that I'm able to rise up and grow stronger.

And now, when we grow up stronger and we start succeeding and we start having success in our lives, then look at what chapter 8, verse 10 says:

And you will eat and be sated,
and you shall bless the Lord,
your God, for the good land He
has given you.

-Deuteronomy 8:10

You know in Western culture, people say grace before the meal. In biblical culture, the commandment is to say a blessing AFTER the meal. Why? It's a great lesson. Just practicing. When you're hungry, when you're in trouble, when things are difficult, everyone has a natural instinct to call out to God for help. I'm going to surgery, I have a problem. I need a job. God, come and help me. No, no, no. The Torah is saying, "Yes, obviously then you're going to pray. Once you eat and you're satisfied, then you shall bless the Lord your God."

And now, O Israel, what does the Lord, your God, ask of you? Only to fear the Lord, your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, which I command you this day, for your good.

-Deuteronomy 10:12-13

Once you already got what you need, that's when prayer matters the most. That's when there's a biblical mandate to say grace, after your belly is already full. Because the verses continue and they say, "Ahhh...if you continue down that path, once you achieve success, once you settle the Land of Israel, once you've gotten to where you meant to be in your life, then what might happen? It's still

not over. Because then you might think, "It's my strength and the power of my hand that has created this success for me." And uh oh. That's a slippery slope. That will be an absolute recipe for failure.

And so there's an old saying. I'm sure some of you have heard it. It says that life happens a little bit at a time and then all at once. And what does that mean? It's actually referring to a principle called, "The Accumulation of Marginal Gains." And I think that the people that succeed in life, they embrace this principle. And what is it saying? Just marginal gains. Accumulative. Another small step forward. Another win. Small steps. There's no like, "Overnight I won the lottery!" That's ok, that happens sometimes, but for most people – it's like one step at a time. Learn another Hebrew letter in Hebrew, another letter in Hebrew, another word. Slowly but surely, getting better, getting stronger. You know you can lose a few ounces a day, keep it at that. But then if you keep on losing a few ounces a day, all of a sudden you look around and you say, "I lost ten pounds! How did that happen?" It's like, "Yeah, it happened slowly, but then it starts to happen all at once."

It's like if you let your attitude to life, let's say you have a job and you're like, "You know, it's not right, start complaining." All of a sudden you hate your job. It's like slowly, but surely you start becoming those incremental steps actually lead to something big. And so, you don't notice each small step. But then, what do you notice? The aggregation of those daily actions. And so what does the Torah saying? It's like the simple steps, just follow those commandments. Another step forward, another step forward. You're just strengthening yourself, you're preparing yourself. And then when the time comes, you are going to be the person you need to be. Because all that matters in life is the character that we build and who we become. That can never be taken away from us. And that's what the Torah is trying to build us into.

And so, now you want the summary of it all. These are maybe the most powerful verses in the Torah. This is chapter 10, verses 12 and 13. And here's what it says:

And now, O Israel, what does the Lord, your God, ask of you? Only to fear the Lord, your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes, which I command you this day, for your good.

-Deuteronomy 10:12-13

you.”

He asks for four things. Are you ready? Only to fear the Lord, your God, that is number one. Second, to walk in all His ways and to love Him and to serve Him...

For your good. Why am I telling you all of this? I’m telling you this “for your good.” You don’t need to keep these commandments for Me. God doesn’t need us to keep His commandments. It’s “for

And so, let’s break down these four, really quickly. One – fear the Lord. What does that mean? Fear of the Lord is really a bad translation of the word yirah. Fear is pachad. Yirah is more awe, maybe reverence. Reverence of the Lord. Meaning modern society, it makes a joke out of everything. Everything is a joke. Nothing can be taken seriously. It’s just nihilistic. It’s like, no. Take existence seriously. Take life seriously. Evil will make everything a joke and just laugh it off. Fear of the Lord – the beginning of wisdom is yirat shamayim. Is having a reverence, a fear of HaShem.

Second, is to walk in His ways. That’s a different command than to keep His commandments. What does walking in His ways mean? Means that there are ways that God manifests Himself. He manifests Himself in a spirit throughout the stories of the Bible. Justice, compassion, truth. And in fact, the prophets of Israel and the mystics after created the soul map for us. Such an amazing map to teach us, what are God’s ways? Never mind the commandments. I got it. But I want to know God’s ways. How do I walk God’s ways in the world? And so the soul map series really lays that out for us. Love and compassion, chesed. Strength and discipline, givurah. Truth, victory and courage, gratitude, equanimity. To walk in God’s ways and manifest His Spirit to be a reflection of His light in the world. That’s to walk in His ways.

Then the second, if you want to serve God. But you need to serve God, you have to live life with all your soul. This is number three. And all of your heart. That’s the story. It’s for your good. He’s giving us...some people they just want to kind of like lay low, just kind of go to my job, come home, watch the ball game, don’t make too much noise, don’t press myself, don’t stress myself, just keep it low. That’s not going to be good for you. God says, “If you want what’s good for you. Whatever you’re working at right now, if it’s your marriage, if it’s your children, being a husband, being a father, being a brother, being an employee, being a boss, whatever it is. Give it your all. Serve God in whatever service is before you with all of your heart, and all of your might. Put your whole effort into it. That’s the way that it will be good for you in the end. These are just guidelines to help us live the best life possible.

And then number four. Keep the Commandments of the Lord. Those will never change. Just keep practicing. Small, incremental gains. Every time you do a mitzvah, you've added a new light into your life. And you don't see the light because it's small. But more light and more light and more light, all of a sudden – it's like, whoa, I lost 10 pounds. Whoa, I'm becoming, I see, I'm more courageous. Every time I was nervous, I flexed my emunah muscle, and I just went forward and I faced my fear. And all of a sudden, I'm becoming a courageous person. That's incredible. That can only happen with incremental steps. That's what the mitzvot are. They're just training us, step by step. To become better, to become stronger, to become holier.

And then, here we have now the greatest of all things. The great narrative of the Bible. What this is all about. It's chapter 10, verses 14 and 15. And here's what it says:

Behold, to the Lord, your God, belong the heavens and the heavens of the heavens, the earth, and all that is on it. Only your forefathers the Lord desired, to love them, and He chose their seed after them you, out of all peoples, as it is this day.

-Deuteronomy 10:14-15

Galaxies, and universes beyond universes. I mean the men then, they saw the stars and they realized there's existences beyond the stars, it's ein sof, it's endless, it's infinity. God, all of that belongs to Him in all the earth. And everything that's on it. But what did God want with all of these galaxies and all of these stars?

That's all God wanted, imagine that. All of a sudden, finally, after who knows how many gazillions of years. Abraham was born. And it's like, finally, that's the one that I've been waiting for. He's going to be the example. I'm going to choose Abraham and Sarah, one man and one woman. I'm gonna choose them. And when I show the world through them that I can choose one person, the whole world will know that I can choose all people. I can live in a personal relationship with every person because I'm choosing the one that I love the most. I'm choosing Abraham now, and his children. I'm going to choose the people of Israel and they are going to be a living example that if I watch Israel, it means that I can watch everyone. I can promise to just love everyone, but if I love everyone the same, maybe I don't love anyone. What does love even mean to God? But I will show the world through Abraham. Watch. Just Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And watch their seed after them, as I take them to the Land and take them out of the Land, and bring them back to the Land, and spread them around the world and fulfill prophecy after prophecy that the world should know that I run the world. How do you know? Watch Abraham and his children. That's the unfolding story.

But I want you to know there's another force in the world. You know Tehila mentioned Klaus Schwab from the world economic forum. Have you guys seen this guy?



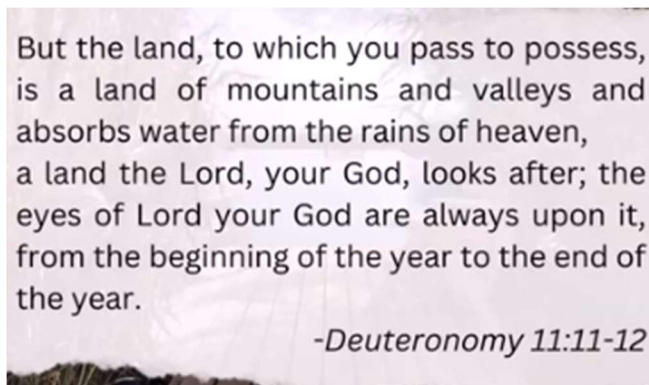
I try not to talk to much about these people, but when you look at a picture of him, I feel like all he needs is like a bald cap, like the bad guy in the movie. He's just like, can you make like a German more scary looking dude? Like being bad things in the world. And so, one of his books that he's written is called, "The Great Narrative."



Have you heard of this book? It's pretty unbelievable. There's a picture of it. This book exists. And so what is he really trying to do? The world, the Bible, IS the narrative. It's the narrative and it is the roots of Western civilization as we know it. It's what brought morality to the world, it's what brought God to the world. It is the unfolding story in prophecies that were written in the Bible, encoded into the world that are manifesting themselves.

And what they're trying to do is create a new narrative. Like we're going to uproot Western civilization as we know it. Get rid of the Bible and here I'm going to present you a new, great narrative where there's going to be a useless class. And we're just going to get rid of those useless people...it's like so evil, it's like so crazy. But that's actually how you can see the clash of good and evil that come together now.

And what does God say at the end? Obviously the most beautiful of all things. Chapter 11, verses 11 and 12. I think this might be my favorite verse in the Torah. And this is the verse for the Land of Israel Fellowship:



The Arugot Farm is a Land of mountains and valleys like nowhere else in Israel. And so what is the final answer to the great new narrative of the world economic forum? God's eyes are on the Land of Israel from the beginning of the year to the year's end. When we first built the Arugot Farm, we were sued in Israel's Supreme Court by Norway, Denmark and Germany. They funded lawyers in Israel to sue us in Israel's

Supreme Court. And we are a living testimony that Germany doesn't run the world, the European Union doesn't run the world, the World Economic Forum doesn't run the world. God runs the world. His plan will pass, His story is unfolding, His prophecies are being fulfilled, and His promise is forever. And we are a 4,000 year testimony – Eikev tishmau. If you follow the path of righteousness, empires will rise and this WOKE movement will fall and blow away with the wind. But the Torah is an everlasting source of wisdom, and it will last.

And as you can see in Israel, we're only getting stronger. We're only getting better. We're only growing, and so we are the living witness that God runs the world and the Land of Israel Fellowship. What a name. Because it is the center stage, it is where God's eyes are on all the time, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, every single day.

And so, Land of Israel Fellowship, may we all be blessed with the blessings of Israel that God's eyes should be in our lives. And our eyes should be on Him. And that we should bring His light into our life and bless our families and lift everyone around us up as we continue to ascend together toward a New Jerusalem. May you all be blessed from this place.



Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

Shalom my friends, we'll see you again soon.