

Session 237

10 August 2025

Ve'etchanan - As Israel Prepares to Take Over Gaza – Moses Prays to Enter the Land

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmm0ijY6Mmc>

Jeremy

Hey, everybody, it's so good to see you all. Ari, it's good to see you. Everyone, I love scrolling through and seeing all of your faces, reading the chats from around the world. This Fellowship is a lifeline for me. Life in Israel is so tumultuous. This Fellowship is just my anchor. And Tehila and I and Ari we talk to each other all of the time about the Fellowship, the ideas we want to share on the Fellowship, members on the Fellowship that need our prayers, members of the Fellowship that are coming to Israel. In my life, I've just never seen anything like our Fellowship. It's so beautiful, it's so historic. And all of us have a part in it.

And last Sunday, as we fasted on Tisha B'Av, we had the largest Fellowship gathering in the history of our Fellowship. What a sign of the times we're living in. It was so beautiful, having us all gather together, inviting new people to experience what we've created. The feedback that we received was just off the charts! And so many new families joined our movement, it felt like our Fellowship actually laid a stone in the wall for a new Temple in Jerusalem. I mean, we've never been so close.

When you really think about it, where we were 80 years ago, the Jewish people were in Auschwitz, the pope was sitting behind Hitler, endorsing his speech, and the persecuted Jews were helpless and hopeless, scattered around the world in different countries. And here we are today, in Israel, so many processes had to happen, so many miracles had to manifest. The Nazis needed to be defeated. The Jewish people needed to be ingathered from around the world, established a Jewish country, rebuild our economy, rebuild the army, Israel needed to be reborn again, Jerusalem had to be reunited. What we had to do, it's like unbelievable.

And what God had to do, He delivered. He brought us from Auschwitz to where we are today, and it's really mind-blowing. But it also gives us a perspective. If we were able to do all of that in just 80 years, for us to go from where we are now to actually building a Temple, a House of Prayer for all Nations in Jerusalem, it's just not that far away. We are so close. Peace in Israel is not that far away. And since the war in Gaza, Jews and Christians have been given full freedom to pray publicly on the Temple Mount. If you open your eyes, we've just never been closer.

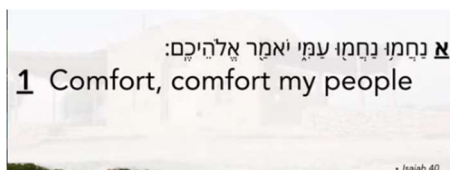
And Rav Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel said that when war comes into the world, the power of Mashiach is awakened. And he said that before he died, before the Holocaust, before the rebirth of the State of Israel. And we saw his words come to life. As war entered into the world, huge steps toward our redemption just came forth. And what's important for us to know is that when war erupts in the world, the world will emerge better, the world will become closer and closer to our redemption.

And right now, it's like we've entered into a new time. Tisha B'Av is behind us, summer vacation is ahead of us. We just celebrated Tu B'Av over Shabbat, a day of love and happiness and romance. Tu B'Av was the originally Valentine's Day and the Mishna records that it was one of the happiest days of the year in Israel. And coming right after Tisha B'Av, the saddest of days, the Hebrew calendar forces us to live in extremes. It's like to experience life to the fullest. In modern times, it's the same way that Israel's Memorial Day, Yom HaZikaron comes right before Yom Ha'Atzmaut, Israel's Independence Day. And Israel has been juxtaposing these lows and highs, I guess since the times of the Temple.

But you can see that sometimes, reality is just that. It's a mixture of lows and highs. And the Torah is training us to hold both, live with both. And about a month ago, Israel pulled off one of the greatest military victories of the century. In twelve days, Israel neutralized Iran, our biggest threat. Not one soldier was killed, not one plane was shot down. The most optimistic military experts were saying that Israel would suffer five to ten thousand deaths. We lived through manifest miracles. And now, Lebanon is working to disarm the Hezbollah who was the second biggest threat to Israel. In some ways, Israel has never been in a better position in the Middle East.

And on the other hand, the war in Gaza is still in full swing, our hostages are still being held captive, Hamas are still in power. They're stealing food, we have to be able to see the good, feel the gratitude, and at the same time, hold the bad and just keep moving forward in faith.

And every year, the Shabbat after Tisha B'Av is called Shabbat Nachamu, the Shabbat of Consoling. We read from Isaiah, chapter 40, the Haftarah –



And the Shabbat after Tisha B'Av, always falls on the Torah portion of Ve'etchanan. And so, it seems that the secret to consolation is actually encoded in the Torah portion. And that's what we're going to explore today. What is the way forward? And how do we chart a path toward complete redemption?

You know, Isaiah chapter 40 says, “Nachamu, nachamu ami,” comfort, comfort my people. But nachamu is a command given to a group of people. It’s like nachamu is translated comfort in plural. Who is the group that God is telling to comfort His people? Is it the righteous among the nations of the world? Are they being called to comfort Israel?

This week I learned just a beautiful idea. That prophecy is actually directed to the last generation in Israel. Comfort My people by doing what needs to be done and accomplishing what God has called us to accomplish. By establishing sovereignty in the Land of Israel, by bringing peace to the region, by building a Temple in Jerusalem, by spreading a light from Zion. Be the comfort and the consolation. And in so many ways our Fellowship is the answer to that command. Comfort My people.

Finally, there’s an international movement of believers in God, lovers of Israel, who have come together from around the world in Fellowship, who learn together, who pray together, who grow together in their service of HaShem, and their service of Israel. A movement that is a first in history and who came into being right as the redemption is unfolding in order to tell our people, “Be comforted, we are on the way.”

And so with that, I just want to start off our Fellowship with a prayer. So, let’s take this opportunity to bring our hearts together from around the world from so many different places, from so many languages, bring them all to the Land of Israel and then from this Land, direct it up to heaven toward HaShem.

HaShem, Master of the Universe, the Source of all life, King of the world. Thank You for gathering us here once again from the ends of the earth to take one more step together on this journey toward a new Jerusalem. Week after week we walk together, we learn together, we pray together, we aim our lives toward You and Your calling in our lives. Just days ago we sat together mourning on Tisha B’Av. We’ve mourned the destruction of Jerusalem and Your holy Temple. Bless us, HaShem to live to see and celebrate the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the rebuilding of Your Temple. Let us be there to witness the nation streaming to Your House of Prayer for all peoples. Let us play our part in making that vision real.

As we start our week, we dedicate this time to You. May our learning together be our prayer together. Open our hearts to receive Your guidance in our lives, align our steps with Your will. Make us worthy to be partners with You in bringing light to the darkened world. HaShem, bless every soul in this Fellowship for they have chosen to align their destiny with the destiny of Israel. Bless them, bless their families, bless the work of their hands, surround them with Your protection, fill their homes with peace, their hearts with courage, and their lives with Your light.

May that light flow from them into the lives of everyone they meet until the whole world shines with Your light from Zion. Amen.

All right, my friends. Tisha B'Av is behind us, but the summer is officially upon us. In Israel, everyone is on vacation. There's no school, there's just absolute hot weather, open roads, and I know that Ari is on the road right now with his family, making memories and making the most of the time he has when it matters most. But, like every week, he's here to share with his wisdom, to share his personality we all love, his walk with HaShem that inspires me every day. And so, with that, I want to invite Ari Abramowitz to take it away.

Ari

Thank you, Jeremy, I appreciate that and shalom everybody. Jeremy is right, I am here in Ashkelon. We just arrived today. I've been excited about this vacation like...I feel I haven't been so excited since I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. You know like when you're a little kid you get so excited about things and every day that goes by is another day you're marking off and...I really thought that those days were over for me when I became a grownup. And apparently not. To bring my children here to Ashkelon, my wife to Ashkelon, because you know we're in the hills of Judea and life there is intense. I'm in the army, I'm patrolling, I'm guarding, things are happening, I love it, I wouldn't trade it for anything in the whole world, but it's intense.

And so for me to take the kids and we're going to go to the beach tomorrow morning, we're just here together, I'm so excited because I have to share them with whatever institutions they're in. Kindergarten or ma'on or preschool and their things and they spend most of their day there. Now I get to be with my family all day and I'm just so excited and grateful for it. And so I actually unenrolled in the army for two weeks because they weren't going to give me this time off, so I just told them, I'm leaving, I'm leaving the army now. And they said, "But we need you." I said, "So you want to just re-accept me when I return in two weeks?" And they said, "Yeah." So I'm officially not a soldier right now. And so, I'm wearing this white shirt. I don't even remember the last time I wasn't wearing my fatigues and my greens.

And I get here to Ashkelon and then, I don't know if you heard. I realized the audio was on while Jeremy was speaking. Boom! Boom! Boom! And I'm like, "Oh right, Gaza is right there. We're still at war, we're still at war." And Jeremy really said it right when he said, "You are our comfort." I cannot tell you, we receive so much hate mail and vicious hatred. After I was on that BBC interview, the amount of videos made about me, I mean it was just beyond. And then I get so much love from you guys. I can say that as a microcosm of the Jewish people, as one simple Jew, you are a tremendous comfort to me.

Anyways, so we haven't had so much tourism at the Farm because the war is still happening and there are fewer and fewer people. But we still get tours that come. We still get Jews, a lot of tours from within Israel. But I've been getting a few more from around the world. And when people come out to the Farm and they see the magnificence and the beauty of the place, they often look at me and speak to me as if I was some sort of visionary pioneer or developer or something like that. You know, Jeremy, you get that also, right? You get that sort of thing? Anyways, you guys know, I've shared with you, it makes me super uncomfortable because I know in my heart that HaShem called us to these mountains and we said, "Hineni," we said, "Here I am." And pretty much that's all that I can say that's all that I did. And even then, I don't know if I can really claim credit for. He gave me the strength and the inspiration to do that. You know, anything and everything beyond that though, that was HaShem's doing which He did through us. But for us to take credit, or at least for me to take credit would be totally out of line.

And I often tell people that my shilchut here in these mountains, my emissary, I'm an emissary in these mountains. It isn't really about building structures. It's about building identity, it's about awakening, first in myself and then in the thousands of Jews and non-Jews who come each year to these mountains of Judea for our educational tour experiences, to stay with us, to walk the mountains, to awaken us to who we truly are within the unfolding story of redemption taking place in our days.

And I find that some of the most emotionally challenging tours I give are to my Ultra-Orthodox, my Charedi brothers and sisters – especially those from the United States. Those in Israel, a lot of Israelis are angry with them and resentful of them. They're not serving in the army, I think I've worked through that. When I speak to these groups of Charedim in Israel, I always say to them, "I'm just so honored to be serving in the army and I'm willing and honored to give my life for each and every single one of them." I say to them, "Every single one of you." And I feel like in their hearts it must be like, "Wow, there's this Jew who we look at and he must seem like an ignoramus in our eyes, but meanwhile, he really is willing to die for us? Are we willing to do that for him?" That's at least what I feel is happening.

But these ones from America, they're a different breed altogether. They come out to these mountains and I know they must feel something deep in their hearts, how could they not? Yet the callouses that have formed over their hearts are thick, are like fortified by years of a world view that insists that the nation of Israel is still in gallus, still in exile. And that these mountains are no less exile than their homes in Brooklyn. Just two days ago, a young Jewish man from Brooklyn told me he was perfectly content there and that he doesn't believe, at least before Mashiach comes, that the rolling hills of Judea beneath our feet, are any holier than the rat-

infested subways of Brooklyn. He said Brooklyn, ok? I added the rat-infested subway part. But that's what I remember about Brooklyn. But anyways, it really broke my heart, truly, to see this beautiful, young Jewish man, so deeply influenced by the ten spies of our generation that are teaching and whatever it is that he's learning there. To watch him stand upon these holy, sacred mountains, the very hills where King David composed the Psalms of Israel, and let such words spill from his lips, was really almost unbearable. You know I told him, I said, "Open your eyes, look southeast...right there! I said, right there, look right there. Look at the majestic mountains of Moav and realize that in this very week's Torah portion, Moshe stood on these very ridges and there, on one of those peaks that we can see with our own eyes, he made the singular, only personal request of his life – to cross over and enter the Land of Israel. He pleaded with all of his heart for the privilege that we now take for granted. That you're taking for granted, I said to him. To stand where we are standing.

This week's Torah portion opens with a cry. Moshe begged, pleaded, cried out to God. Moshe Rabbeinu, our greatest leader, the man who shattered Pharaoh, who ascended into the cloud to bring Torah from heaven to earth is now crying. And not for himself, not for victory, not even for life. He knows that he's about to die, he's not crying, begging for life. He's crying for the Land. Please, let me cross and see the good Land, Moshe begged. Moshe's deepest longing was not to rest, but to enter Eretz Yisrael. He wanted to see it. To touch it, to breathe its dust, to climb its mountains. He had stood there in the fire of Sinai, and yet, what did his heart burn for the most? His heart burned most for the rolling hills of Judea, for the sacred earth of the holy Land. Why? Why? Because Moshe Rabbeinu knew that all of the infinite light of the Torah is destined to be revealed specifically here in this soil, in this air, in the lived reality of God's people in God's Land.

Are you guys hearing me? Are you guys hearing the bombs going off around me? Are you hearing my baby screaming his head off? Ok, there's just a lot going around here. It's a different thing. I tried to explain this to this young Charedi man on the Farm, that the Torah he's learning in Yeshiva everyday may be beautiful and true and profound, but in Brooklyn, it's wisdom. The Torah inside the Land of Israel, however, the Torah of the Land is fire. I know it upset him, and it upsets a lot of people and some people may even label these words heretical. But what can I do? What can I do? They're true, and it's not a truth that really can be argued or proven with evidence. It's a truth that you can only experience. When your feet are on this soil and your soul is breathing this air, you just know it. It's a truth that is testified by Moshe, himself, who received the Torah in the wilderness of the desert exile, yet he wanted nothing more than to come home, to learn the Torah, to live the Torah in the Land of Israel.

And here is the heartbreak. HaShem said, no. Moshe will not enter the Land. But what does HaShem tell him? “Go up to the top of the mountain and see it with your eyes.” But here’s the question. What’s the point of seeing it if he can’t have it? Is HaShem teasing Moshe? God-forbid. You know to the untrained eye, it could seem like cruelty. To let him gaze upon it, to feel a connection to it, yet never to allow him to truly know it, to experience it in the most intimate way. But we know that HaShem is not a cruel God. He is a kind and loving Father, especially for His humble servant, Moses. Even if we don’t always know how to see and experience our journeys through the eyes of love and compassion with which HaShem is giving our journey to us. It is that, and we know it’s that.

So what was HaShem teaching Moshe, and through him teaching all of us. He’s teaching that we could not have understood in any other way, other than this way. He was showing us that when it comes to holiness, when it comes to our relationship with Him, even if you cannot have it for some reason, you must still WANT it. That there’s something inherently sacred in the yearning, itself. A holiness that lives in the longing, which is fascinating because in this very Torah portion, we also read the Ten Commandments. Jeremy, tell me if you noticed this. The 10<sup>th</sup> and final commandment is “Do not covet.” But isn’t HaShem setting Moshe up to do exactly that? If coveting means desiring something that’s not meant for us, then why would God have put Moshe in such a position to yearn so deeply for something that he can’t have?

Rav Moshe Power offers a distinction that I think can change really the way we live. He explains that the prohibition against coveting applies only to things that truly are not meant for us. But that which truly ought to be ours, we MUST covet, we MUST desire, and we must never stop yearning for it. He even points out that the very word, chemdah, the Land of Israel is described as eretz chemdah, the same root word as lo tachmod – tachmod, chemdah. It comes from the word, covet. The Torah, itself calls our homeland, the Land of Israel, the Land of our coveting. Moshe understood that all of Torah, everything, finds its fullness only in the Land of Israel. That’s why he wanted in. Outside of the Land, the Torah is like a letter on a page. And in the Land, the Torah becomes a living voice.

And friends, we must remember something we’ve learned before. That everything Moshe touched was eternal. And our sages teach us that part of Israel’s destiny was to enter into the Land, inherit the Land, but also that we are going to sin, and our Temple would be destroyed. And so if Moshe had entered the Land and built a Temple, it could never have been destroyed. So he could only stand at its edge gazing in with his heart-breaking longing. But because of everything that Moshe touched being eternal, that longing itself became eternal. That longing itself was planted in the heart of every Jew, and the heart of every true lover of Israel for all generations. Because my friends, we are defined ultimately, we are defined by what we yearn

for, what our deepest desire is. And if our hearts are consumed with desires that are never meant for us, we lose our true calling.

My rabbi once taught me that the only way the Torah could command us not to covet...an emotion, how could the Torah tell us not to have an emotion, is because the desire to covet, it's a lie, it's a falsehood, it's a destructive fantasy. One could even say that most marriages that collapse do so because of this sin. The belief that I'm not meant to be with the person that I'm with. I'm truly supposed to be with this imagined person I've created in my own mind that would make me happy. But if we truly knew that HaShem has given us the perfect person for this exact moment in our life, the one we need for the growth and the journey of our soul, we would never covet. Because clearly our neighbor's wife is sanctified to him, and to desire her is the very definition of yearning for what's not meant for us.

And my friends, we must never desire that which is not meant for us, but when our hearts yearn for the things that we are meant to have, the Beit HaMikdash, the Temple, the full redemption, the return of all of our people to the Holy Land, well that is a yearning that is holy. And that is a yearning that becomes who we are. And as Jeremy said, we read this Torah portion on Shabbat Nachamu. Moshe was not rejected. He was redirected. He was taught that even when you cannot enter, you can still stand on the mountain and yearn. And that longing itself, that yearning is transformative. And so too with us. Without the Temple, we can still turn our eyes towards Jerusalem, still long for her, still mourn for her. And as our sages say, "One who mourns for Jerusalem will merit to see her joy."

So our longing, my friends, our longing, you guys write me about, and I talk about, we're always reflecting upon and feeling this longing. It's not a wasted energy, it's a spiritual act. I often say to my wife, Shaena, that I love her so much, I love our children so much, that even when I'm with them, I miss them. The same is true for the Land of Israel. I live on this Land and I still yearn for it. All the more so for someone who's not living here. Every moment of yearning for the Land ties one's very soul to this earth and to these stones in a way that we can't even imagine.

Our sages teach us what we already know in our hearts. That if we understood what eretz Yisrael really is, even one breath of its air, one step on its dust, we would yearn like Moshe did, even a thousand times stronger. We are living in the days Moshe dreamed of. And the fire of Har Sinai, of Mount Sinai still burns, the flames of Sinai still rage. But the raging in the stones of Yerushalayim and in the mountains of Judea and in the hearts of all of those that really yearn for her.



And so, I want to bless us. I want to bless us that may the yearning of Moshe Rabbeinu, the longing that God, Himself preserved for all generations burn brightly in our own hearts. And may we never grow numb to the holiness of the Land of Israel. Whether we live upon her soil, or we dream of her from far away. May every breath we take here, every prayer we send toward this Land, every tear we shed for the wholeness of this Land bind our souls more deeply to her destiny. And may we learn to turn away from empty desires that were never meant for us and to pour all our love, all our hope, all of our strength into the things that are meant for us. May our longing for the Beit HaMikdash, for the full redemption, for the Temple, for the ingathering of all of our people become the very pulse of who we are. And may the day come quickly when our yearning turns to dancing, our tears to laughter, and our prayers to songs of thanksgiving, and we see Jerusalem built, her stones kissed by her children, by each and everyone of us, her streets filled with the voice of joy and the voice of the bride and the groom. And until that day, may we stand like Moshe on the mountain with our eyes fixed on the promise. Our hearts unshakeable in love and our souls bound forever to the Land and the God Who gave it to us. Shalom my friends, thank you.

Jeremy

Wow, Ari, thank you so much. That was absolutely beautiful. Coveting, loving, you know this Shabbat we celebrated Tu B'Av, the holiday of love and romance and marriage. And I know that I said this before, but I'll say it again. I've been married for more than 20 years. But about a year and a half ago, I had a terrible horse accident, and it was by far the most physical pain that I've ever experienced. It was the longest recovery. I'm still recovering. But in the last year and a half, I discovered a new wife. I discovered a new Tehila, a Tehila that I thought I loved, but in truth I never really knew how incredible she could be. So, it took my horse to tumble in the middle of a gallop and throw me off so I would be able to see Tehila for who she really is. It was worth it. We are so lucky to have such a giving, righteous, beautiful person in our lives. And with that, I want to introduce the star of my life and the star of the Fellowship, Tehila Gimpel.

Tehila

Hey everybody. Thank you, thank you. Thank you, Ari, thank you, Jeremy for the sweet words. I told Jeremy I'd be talking about the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av and saying romantic things, so he always tries to outdo me. He won't outdo me today! So, great to see everybody.

This month that we're in, the month of Av is tricky. The first part we're just stricken with grief over the destruction. But as the month goes on, we start to study the prophecies of redemption. Within every breakdown and every brokenness, every fall, as Jeremy was just talking about his fall, but like physical falls and spiritual falls, HaShem plants within us the seeds to rebuild and repair.

So just one week after we have the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, we get the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av. The Talmud says that there were no happier days for Israel than Yom Kippur and the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av because on these days the young maidens would share white dresses with one another and dance in the vineyards and go out and find their husbands. And it's become sort of this holiday of love and marriage. But what's interesting is...why the connection to Yom Kippur? Right? That doesn't seem intuitively obvious. Why would the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av be related to Yom Kippur?

And I think it's drawing our attention to something. Just like after the golden calf that happened on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, we have Yom Kippur when we get second tablets to replace those first tablets that were destroyed because of the sin and we began to recover. So also, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, where that started out with the sin of the spies, we're also given a corresponding day that's a way out and it's a path forward.

You know, I'm sure everybody knows this, but in the Jewish tradition when you lose someone, the day of mourning, the week of mourning starts on the day of the death and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day you get up and you dust yourself off and you have to move on. That would actually turn out to be the 15<sup>th</sup> day. The 15<sup>th</sup> day is actually the end of the shiva, of the seven days of mourning that we mourn over the destruction that happened on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av. So the height of our sadness is on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, that's the day of the sin of the spies, the day of the destruction. You don't just bounce back from something like that. You need a shiva, you need seven days of mourning to process.

But then comes the 15<sup>th</sup> and we start looking forward to rebuild. Now what symbolizes rebuilding in the biblical tradition, in the biblical way of looking at life more than the creation of new homes, the creation of marriage? If the destruction of the Temple, the breakdown of that home, that most important home, the dwelling place of God in our midst. Well in each person's life, at least, we can try to make a home that would be a model, a miniature dwelling place of holiness. So, it might be in a different way, but building homes, building marriages, building families, symbolizes, it embodies our belief in the beauty and the redemption of the future. It's that belief that HaShem has a plan for the world that's going to end in the good.

Nowadays we look around at the world and as people believe less and less in the real goodness of the world and that there's a destiny guided by God, then interest in getting married and having children goes down because if you don't believe that there's a meaningful future and only the present moment matters, then the ease and comfort of just thinking about yourself is always going to override the desire or almost always going to override the desire to build and plant and work and invest toward the next generation.

So, setting this love day as Tu B'Av, right after the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av is kind of the believer's answer to the pain of the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av. We don't just study on books, prophecies of redemption, we have to actually try to live redemption in our own lives.

And then on Shabbat, our friend pointed out something really cool. There's a book called "The Scroll of Ta'anit," we might have discussed it in the past. It's a recording from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple period of days that it was forbidden to fast. You weren't supposed to be sad on those days. And it's a really valuable document historically. In practicality, these days aren't really observed anymore. But there's a whole bunch of really valuable information here about all different kinds of days that were marked as happy occasions during that 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple period. And in that scroll it says that you shouldn't fast on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Av because that's when they completed chopping wood for wood offerings.

What does that mean? Isn't that odd? It says that families would volunteer to chop up wood for the offerings in the Temple. You know in the Temple, the holidays are coming up in the month of Tishrei, there's going to be Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and Sukkot and there's going to be a lot of pilgrims and there's going to be a lot of offerings, and you need wood. And it says in the Scroll of Ta'anit that starting from the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av, the sun gets a little less hot and a little less dry. There's more moisture in the air and the wood might get wormy if you cut it now. They need like that hot sun to get dry. What does that mean? What kind of day is that to celebrate?

Well, I think what this day was actually celebrating was to give a little bit of thought to those people that were chopping the wood. Like I don't know about you, but for me when I heard that, that was the first time that I said to myself, "Huh, there were wood-choppers in the Temple." You think of services in the Temple, you think of the priests and their garments, and you think of the animals being sacrificed, and the people coming from all over the country, dressed in their finest, bringing their children in their wagons, and this big barbecue and all of like the guts and glory of it. But no one thinks about the fact that that takes a lot of wood. Doesn't it take a lot of wood to do that? Nobody really thinks about those woodcutters. Behind every sacrifice there was somebody who stood there chopping wood in the dry, burning sun of the month of Av so that other people could make their sacrifices easily and without inconvenience or difficulties.

Is it a coincidence that it also comes out on this day of love, this day of marriage on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Av, that symbolizes building homes and marriages? It struck me that obviously the sun doesn't necessarily get so much less hot on the 15<sup>th</sup>. I think that what this day is trying to teach us is to

give recognition to those who do the hard work, that quiet thankless work, maybe the work in the home, the work that's not so glamorous, to give honor to those people in the Temple, in our marriages, in our homes, in our lives, actually you know who came to my mind? In our home here on the Fellowship, all the wood that Tabitha chops. How much do we love Tabitha for constantly chopping the wood so that we can be here. To think about every slide that she cuts and every sound check that you do, and I was thinking about with me and Jeremy. There's so much that goes into raising a family, but what holds you together is those countless, small acts of love. The ones that don't get a ton of attention, it's not your anniversary, it's not a bouquet of flowers, it's those small wood choppings that really are what hold the home together, it's what held the Temple together, it's what holds our community together.

So I think this is just a beautiful day to just remember and to just say thank you to those people in our lives and to notice even in our selves those little bit of wood choppings that we do. If it means setting up the chairs in our prayer community or if it means attending to the small needs of our children. This is a day to...actually it was yesterday, but I couldn't talk to you guys yesterday, so this season is a season to be thinking about the wood choppers and to just send them some love. So I'll thank my dear Jeremy for being my wood chopper in so many different ways and for all the many countless acts of kindness and with that, I wish you guys a beautiful week.

Jeremy

All right, so for those that are interested, and if you're a woman, and you want to participate in the Women of Valor, led by Tehila, that's happening tonight, one hour after the Fellowship. It's open to every woman in the Fellowship, you just have to email Tabitha, you join the community, and you are in. And that is a way to just continue this faith journey and there's just some things that it's good to have woman power, it's good to have women exclusivity with Tehila as the leader. And she is the most wonderful. So thank you, Tehila for that, you chop so much wood, I don't even know. I'm like a wood chuck just chucking on all of your wood because it's just endless.

So here's what I want to do now. I want to look at the Torah portion and when you think about the Torah, everyone around the world whose plugged into the parsha, everyone reads the same word. Everyone is getting the same guidance in our lives. When you think about it, so many Jews, so many believers among the nations are learning the same living Word every week. It's really remarkable. And every week a message comes down from above and all who want it, everyone has access to it. The same Divine, living Word that's guiding all of us. And it's really plugging and connecting all of us around the world.

And in Ve'etchanan, last week's Torah portion, it's one of the most important parshas in the Torah. It goes through so much, Moses final prayer to enter into the Land, Moses retells the story of the 10 Commandments, and the revelation at Sinai. We learn about the Shema, the most important prayer and mantra for Israel. So much is packed into this one parsha.

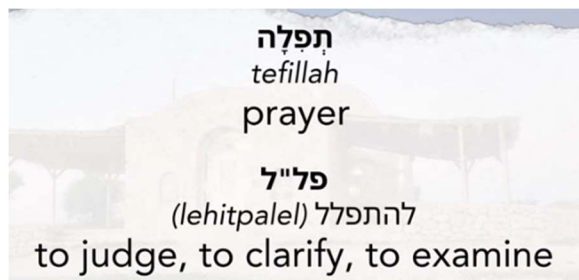
And so now, what I want to do, because I want to go through the parsha, highlight by highlight, and open up the treasure chest of the Torah that I discover and explore its message for us today. And so just like Ari said, the parsha starts off with Moshe's final prayer to God, a prayer that in the end isn't answered. There's some deep messages here. And I think, first, Moses prays to enter into the Land of Israel. What does he want? He's not asking for anything else – he's not asking for money, he's not asking for long life or fame. His final prayer and wish was to enter into the Land of Israel. It also started with the Land of Israel when God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And it all ends with the Land of Israel. It finally ends with 40 years in the desert. And even today, the war with Chamas, and the war with Iran and Chezbollah, it's all truly about the Land of Israel. Will the people of Israel inherit what God promised them in His covenant? Moses wanted it, he wanted to cross the finish line and bring Israel into the promise.

But the Torah makes it crystal clear, he doesn't just pray. He begs. Ve'etchanan literally means, "And Moses begged." And here Moses actually gives over one of the deepest lessons about Hebrew prayer. Hebrew prayer, tefillah, doesn't mean to pray. And when people translate la'hitpalel as to pray, they're really missing the mark. And perhaps that's the final lesson Moses is giving over when he begs to God to enter into the Land of Israel. I think it's remarkable that the final prayer of the Torah, given over by the greatest national leader, isn't answered. You would think that the Torah would want to encourage people to pray. Say even when God decreed it, Moses wouldn't enter the Land, prayer can overcome anything. Everything with God is possible. God will always answer your prayer.

But that's not exactly what's happening here. Moses led the exodus from Egypt, guided Israel through 40 tumultuous years in the desert, we finally arrive in the Land of Israel, right at the edge, Moses prays his final prayer, this climactic moment of prayer. He's rejected and his prayer isn't answered. His answer is, "No." And clearly, something monumental is happening here.

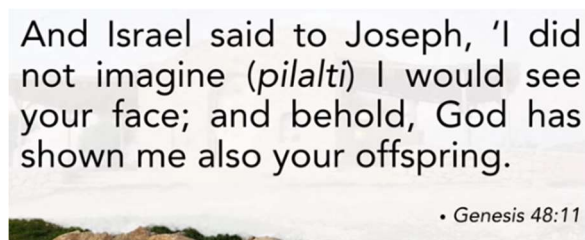
And I think what's happening is that Moses is giving us, not the Torah and the law, he's now in this final speech, teaching us the essence of Hebrew prayer. You see in English, the word pray, comes from the Latin word, precari, which means to beg. That's the way most of the world sees prayer. You're down here, God's up there. You're trying to get something from Him. Please

heal me, please help me, please give me. It's transactional. I lack, You have, I'm asking, I'm begging, I'm praying.



But the Hebrew word, tefillah, it's a whole different reality. Tefillah comes from the word, the root pilel, to judge, to clarify, to examine. And its form la'hitpalel is reflexive. It literally means to examine one's self. Like here is an example. La'hitlabesh means, "I'm getting myself dressed." La'hitpalel is also reflexive. It means

that you're doing something to yourself, not necessarily trying to change God. The word pilel first appears in the Torah when Jacob is speaking to Joseph as he prepared to bless Joseph's children. Genesis chapter 48, verse 11:



So Rashi explains the word pilalti means "I did not fill my heart with these thoughts." So the root word of tefillah, Hebrew here is "fill our hearts and our thoughts and to be aware of them."

In English, prayer isn't about changing God's mind. In Hebrew, tefillah is about changing me. It's not transactional. It's not like, "I'll give you a prayer and you'll give me what I want." It's transformational. It's about how can I get closer to You? Not how can I get something from You. It's how can I align my life with Your will? How can I make my will and my desires Your will and Your desires.

Even Moshe, the greatest leader when he begs, he's not given what he wants. And here the Torah is teaching us that HaShem is the truth, HaShem is good, His will will be done. He is reality, itself and beyond. It's far better to align myself with His will than beg God to change His mind to mine. So perhaps God has decided I'm not deserving of that thing that I want. And maybe if I'm successful at changing myself, perhaps then, I'll be deserving.

But even deeper than that, perhaps God wants for my life, exactly what I need and what's truly best for me. How can I align my life with God's will for my life? Abraham Joshua Heschel has a beautiful quote. And he said:

Prayer may not save us.  
But prayer may make us  
worthy of being saved.

• Abraham Joshua Heschel

It's like, this powerful line reminds us that the essence of prayer isn't about demanding or bargaining. Prayer is transformational. It's an act that is shaping us, refining our character, aligning our souls so that we can stand deserving of grace and redemption.

So when we truly enter into tefillah, we're not just throwing words up into heaven in hoping that something sticks. We're stepping into a conversation with the Creator, a relationship that shapes who we are. And requests are a part of it, but the heart of tefillah is connection. It's becoming a vessel for His will in the world.

So imagine, for a moment, on a national level, Israel instead of asking God to grant us victory, there was introspection and judgement. And our prayer was, "How can we fight this battle against evil at the highest level?" Instead of focusing on what we don't have, it's asking God to give us insight and a path forward to victory. I think Israel would look totally different in this war on Gaza. And here Moses on his hands and knees, *ve'etchanan*, is begging God to let him into the Land of Israel and in his final prayer he said, "No." Because prayer should not be focused on making God do what I want, but rather filling my heart and my thoughts. And trying to build my life around what God wants for me.

And that of course, leads us into the next highlight from the parsha. And what does it say? Deuteronomy chapter 4, verses 5 and 6:

Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to *them* in the land which you go to possess. Therefore, be careful to observe *them*; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the nations who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people'.

• Deuteronomy 4:5-6

Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. I just can't even imagine that happening in the world. Right now, I don't remember Israel ever losing the PR war in the world as bad as we're losing it right now. Israel is being attacked from the right and from the left, from the European Union, from the

United Nations, and I can understand why people are confused. Chamas is evil. They attacked Israel and Israel was able to win a war against multiple armies in six days, devastated Iran, thousands of kilometers away in 12 days. We've been at war in Gaza for two years and we don't seem to have any resolution. No one is saying, "Surely this is a great nation, very wise and understanding." No one is saying that about us now.

And I also think, as long as Israel operates without the guidance and guidelines of the Torah, we will never be successful in the Land of Israel. I don't remember even one time an Israeli leader consulting with the Torah giant, or a thought leader in Torah and asking them, "What is the Torah way to fight this war in Gaza? How do we confront this evil?" Right now, we're doing the opposite. We're fighting a war based on the values and rules of the international community that's imposed upon us.

But imagine if we lived our lives and waged our wars based on Torah values and halacha. Had King David been leading the battle into Gaza with today's technology, we wouldn't need to supply our enemies with food because the war would have been over in a week. Then the nations will look at us and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. They know how to get the job done."

Instead, we're looking to the nations to guide us by their laws and their rules of engagement? It's created a worse situation in Gaza, and an ongoing war for almost two years. It's put Israel in a position that we literally can't win the war fighting by their rules. Our lives are ruined, Gazans lives are ruined, everything is in chaos because we haven't even consulted with the Torah. And while we've been following the laws and the rules of the nations, those same nations are now preparing to declare a Palestinian state. It's glaring. Mida kinaged mida – it's measure for measure. If we turn to the nations for wisdom and guidance instead of the wisdom and guidance of the Torah, the wisdom of the nations will lead us to a dead end and never ending war and then the nations will blame us for fighting a war that we never started. If we follow the nations and not the Torah, little Israel will find itself alone and isolated from the nations of the world.

But...it appears that all of this is a part of the process. In the same parsha, Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 7:

The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples.

• Deuteronomy 7:7

So God didn't choose us to be aligned with the biggest nations. He didn't choose us to be the biggest nation, because we were the smallest of all nations. The haters of Israel say, "If God's chosen people is Israel...why are

there only twelve million Jews around the world. You would think that God's chosen people would be the biggest nation on earth. Larger than China."



But He chose us specifically because we were small. And prophecy dictates that we will remain small in number until the very end. So Israel being small isn't proof that God abandoned Israel. It's another proof that God is true to His promises to Israel. Look at Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 27:

And the Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the Lord will drive you.

• Deuteronomy 4:27

Not only did God choose us because we were small. He will ensure that we will remain small throughout the exile until the final redemption of Israel. Why is that?

Because Israel was chosen to be a kiddush

HaShem, to be a sanctification of God's Name in the world. If Israel were the size of China and we would win the war, the country would get all the credit because we were so big and powerful. It would just be a law of nature. Obviously, we would win against nations smaller than us. But HaShem specifically chose a small nation and kept us small to fulfill His promises that everyone in the world would see impossible promises kept, prophecy fulfilled and recognize that God is at work and glory should be given to Him.

So the stage is being set. The greatest threat to the free world today is the jihad of radical Islam. And Israel has strategically been placed in the eye of the storm. And Israel, like an immune system to the body is the first line of defense against evil. And when Israel attacked Iran, Germany said, "Israel is doing the world a favor, and doing the dirty work Germany should be doing." And now, while Israel is in the middle of the darkest region of the world, surrounded by a billion Muslims that just want to throw us into the sea, Germany is threatening to declare a Palestinian State. So clearly, we can't rely on anyone other than HaShem.

And now, credit can't be given to politics or politicians or alliances because politically Israel stands alone on this side of the world. And even now in America, support for Israel is starting to dwindle. I mean I'll tell you a secret. When President Trump was elected, I sighed a sigh of relief. I said, "Finally America is waking up, America is doing tshuvah, they're turning away from WOKE secularism. They're going back to conservative values, and that means America voted to be closer to the Bible. And when you're closer to the Bible, you're closer to Israel." And I thought, "Finally, Israel is going to be on the side of the majority." Every Republican loves Israel.

And now, Republicans are going to run the show. But what a lesson. The Republican party is being fractured before our eyes. Israel can't rely on this political party or that political party. We're destined to stand alone. And the enemies of Israel have invested millions of dollars trying to influence the influencers and make a crack in the conservative movement and it's working. Huge voices with huge followings are slowly turning people away from Israel.

And what will happen is that Israel will be abandoned from the right and from the left. A process is happening in the nations, the righteous among the nations who attach themselves to Israel, they're meant to be a minority as well. Ten men from the nations. It's not going to be a huge movement or a Republican party that controls America. It's going to be the small, righteous believers that are called out of their nations.

And as the nations turn against Israel, the people are going to come out of the woodwork and simply not going to go along with the mainstream. We saw it during covid, there were people who would not comply. The same thing will happen spiritually. People will refuse to side with the Chamas and the jihad, they will refuse to side with evil. With moral clarity, they're going to side with Israel and they're going to say, "If God is with Israel, I am with Israel."

And a line is being drawn and it's not going to be popular to stand with Israel. The only people who are going to stand with Israel will be those who stand with the Bible. Those who truly believe in the living God of Israel. And that's the movement that's being born right now. And it can only come into existence fully when Israel is not mainstream. Israel is going to emerge victorious, alone. And all of the glory is going to go right to God. And Israel's victory is going to ignite a global revival of spirituality. The world, deep down, is waiting for Israel to step into its role and it looks like reality is going to force Israel to be who we were always chosen to be.

But the truth is, before that, we have some internal work that really needs to be done. And this war is refining Israel from within. There're some absolute revolutions that are happening in the Land, and you just can't deny it. I mean, last week, days before Tisha B'Av, the first Ultra-Orthodox IDF battalion completed its training, and hosted their first graduation ceremony in the Old City of Jerusalem. Check out this video and look as they sing and pray for God's Kingdom:



(video) May our eyes see Your Kingdom as it is expressed in the songs of Your might. (end)

It was historic and it was a turning point for the people of Israel because the more religious the army becomes, the more

chances that decisions will be made with the Torah and Torah values in mind.

But deeper than that, Israel is becoming a new nation. And I want to explain why this is such a big deal. As you know, the Charedi Ultra-Orthodox, for the most part, they don't serve in the

IDF. They say the IDF is too secular, they don't want to expose their boys to such an open environment and have them corrupted by secularism. Well, as you know, this is one of the most sensitive topics in Israel. Everyone in the Land is going to battle and there's one sector within Israel that refuses to carry the burden? I mean there is more anger, frustration and division around this topic than arguably any other topic in the country.

But now, for the first time, a new battalion was made, specifically for the Ultra-Orthodox, and you saw it with your own eyes – they're joining. Slowly but surely, Israel is becoming united and changing. I mean we just fasted on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, a day of reflecting about the destruction of the Temple. In the times of the destruction of both Temples, there was just the total breakdown within the nation of Israel. And in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple period, we're told that the cause of destruction was baseless hatred. The people of Israel were so fractured and divided, they invited the destruction. Not so different in the weeks before October 7<sup>th</sup> in Israel.

And now, after two more years of war, this topic of serving in the IDF is so divisive, it can't be ignored anymore. And so, this battalion is a breath of fresh air, and a light of hope. But really, the question is, if *sinat chinam*, baseless hatred, destroyed the Temple, what is the opposite? How do we rectify that situation? How do we build Israel and restore what needs to be restored? And so, most people say baseless hatred, all right, so love and unity. We need unity. But that word is a little bit up in the air. What is unity really mean, practically? I mean, unity, it's like a bit floppy. If I fundamentally disagree with that other person, what does unity really mean? We just agree to disagree? That doesn't sound like the opposite of baseless hatred, to agree to disagree. There must be something more profound that's demanded of this generation.

And I think we can turn to the Torah to seek a deeper answer. And you know, from the beginning, since the days of Abraham, whenever the family is divided, the nation cannot be born. When one brother is cast away, the opportunity moves to the next generation. Abraham had Isaac and Ishmael. Ishmael was cast away. The possibility of a nation passed over to Jacob and Esau. Esau was cast away, the nation couldn't be born. The nation could only be born when Jacob had 12 sons and all of them co-existed and the ground was laid for the nation of Israel to be born.

But then the brothers sold Joseph into slavery and everything started to unravel. But there's one point that we can point to when we can actually witness when Israel as a nation was born. The brothers come down to Egypt, they meet Joseph disguised as an Egyptian leader, second to Pharaoh, Joseph plants a goblet in Benjamin's bag, and when the Egyptians find out that Benjamin was attempting to steal, he's brought to Joseph and sentenced to prison. When that

happens, Judah steps forward and in one moment, he changes everything. And in that moment, the nation of Israel is born. In that moment, we actually see the opposite of baseless hatred. Genesis chapter 44, verses 32 and 33:

I, your servant, am the guarantor of the lad... So now, please let me, your servant, remain as a slave to my Lord in place of the lad.

• Genesis 44:32-33

In that moment, the nation of Israel was saved and the nation as a people was born. I am the guarantor of the lad, I am accountable, I am responsible for the lad. Judah doesn't necessarily know that

Benjamin didn't steal the goblet. And even when the other side is wrong, "I am responsible, I am accountable for my brother. I am the guarantor." That's the opposite of baseless hatred. Not just unity, but radical responsibility for each other. That's an expression of true love.

You know there's a famous Hebrew saying that I never understood until this Tisha B'Av.

כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה  
All of Israel are intertwined  
with each other.

Now arev doesn't just mean intertwined. It means guarantors. It means responsible. It's quoted from that verse and from that story of Judah taking responsibility for Benjamin. Being guarantors for each other.

Why did Judah say that he was a guarantor for Benjamin? He said I am responsible for the lad because of my commitment to my father. Being guarantors for each other because of our commitment to our Father in heaven is exactly what this generation needs. Unity is not the opposite of baseless hatred. In Hebrew it's called aravut hadadit – mutual responsibility for each other. That is the tikkun, that's the rectification of baseless hatred. Radical responsibility for each other, that's what baseless love looks like. It doesn't matter whether you stole or didn't stole. I'm your guarantor, I'm your brother.

Right now, Israel is being forced as a nation to defend each other, to serve each other. The war is forcing us to bond together, to work together so that we can have a future together. Becoming responsible for one another. Kol Yisrael aravim zeh l'zeh ... you can't live that out more than an army at war.

And this situation has been in gridlock between the Ultra-Orthodox and the rest of Israel for years. But now it's slowly opening up. The name of the battalion is called the "Hasmonean Battalion," named after the Maccabee family – the Hashmonaim. And in some ways, the biblical

Jew is being reborn in the Land of Israel. For 2,000 years we couldn't imagine ourselves modeling ourselves after the Maccabees or King David. But now, in this generation, we're watching King David's army being resurrected, and the nation of Israel fighting together, responsible for each other, truly united.

In Deuteronomy chapter 5, verse 19:

These words the Lord spoke to your entire assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness — a great voice, and it did not cease.

• Deuteronomy 5:19

I mean, we were united at Har Sinai and then God's voice came out and it came out great and it never ceased. The Midrash says it never ceased, it's being revealed to us today. God's voice and His revelation is still being

revealed to us – the new insights we have into the Torah that are speaking into our lives. That's a continuation of the revelation at Sinai.

Another idea the Midrash says is that there was no echo, that God's voice went out and it penetrated into the physical reality and there was no voice to bounce back. From that point on, we had the keys to make everything mundane, everything physical into something spiritual, into something holy. And that's why we're not called to remove ourselves from the physical world like a monk, but engaged in the world through the Torah and transform the physical into the spiritual, to elevate the mundane and make it holy. To reveal the Godly spark within everything.

But the third idea in the Midrash speaks to me the most. The third idea was that the great voice from God was given over when God's voice came out to the people of Israel, it was given over simultaneously in all 70 languages of all nations of the world. That means that in some ways, from the very beginning, the revelation of the Torah was already being broadcast to the nations. Leaving Israel with a calling and a responsibility. Not only for each other, but a responsibility to the nations.

And now, in this final generation, Israel is being called to take responsibility for the nations, bring the Torah from Zion, and serve as a light to the nations. That was the original intent, that in so many ways is what this Fellowship represents – a platform, a community that unites all people from all nations and from different backgrounds, open to everyone who are seeking to learn the Torah. Not as an academic book, not as a history book, but as a living Word that's continuing to be revealed, guiding our lives today. Nachamu, nachamu ami, comfort, comfort My people. That is the comfort for our generation, that finally Israel is starting to fulfill our role and soon there will be a new Jerusalem.

How fortunate we are to be living at a time when Jews are returning to Judea and now righteous among the nations are joining the Jewish people and a new movement is being born. That's why the Shema is given over in this week's parsha, right after the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av. Hear O Israel, HaShem is our God, HaShem is one. There's only one God, He is one, we have one God, we have one world, and all of us were created to live as one.

So friends, I want to tie this all together. The Torah portion this week, it is the code to comfort, the code to redemption. It's whispering and shouting the way forward. Align our will with HaShem's will. Take radical responsibility for one another. Live by the wisdom of the Torah and carry the light of Zion to the nations. The voice from Sinai has never stopped. It still calls us today, just like it called our ancestors, urging us to transform the world around us, into vessels of holiness. I mean we've entered into a time that a line is going to be drawn and it's clearer now than ever before. It won't always be easy. It won't always be popular, but we were not chosen because we were many. We were chosen because we were few so that the victories of Israel will make the world see the Hand of God in the world.

And so our task is clear, together as Jews, as righteous among the nations, together as God's people, as the macro nation of Israel has one Fellowship bound by faith and destiny. We're already laying the stones for the future Temple.

And so, may we merit to see the day when the nations stream to Jerusalem, when their swords are beaten into plowshares, when the knowledge of God covers the earth like water covers the sea. And until then, we keep walking forward together with courage, faith, and happiness on Tu B'Av, knowing that the Author of History is walking here with us.

And so, friends, I want to bless you as you are such a blessing to us, I'll bless you as a priestly nation from a holy Land. And so may all of you be blessed.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

May HaShem bless you and guard you. May HaShem shine His countenance upon you and be gracious to you. May HaShem lift His countenance upon you and bless you with shalom.

Shalom my friends.