

Session 238
Eikev – The Vulnerability of Love
17 August 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKYr2JCjhfs>

Ari

Shalom everybody, good to see you. Can you see me? Give me a thumbs up. Great, great, I think I see your thumbs up. There's a big glare. Jeremy, give me a thumbs up. Ok, great. It is good to see all of you, so good to see all of you. Cal and Ardelle, I agree with you. Reunions never get old. Tabitha puts these slide shows together and it's so encouraging and uplifting. And it's the same song (I'm coming home), it's already like a private joke in Israel. Every time someone walks in the door from the army, they play that on their phone. Yeah, it's a beautiful thing, it's really a beautiful thing, they don't get old.

And I am still here in Ashkelon on vacation with my family. Now you all know that Shaena and I are 45 years old. And we have three children that are 5 and under. So even vacation, perhaps particularly vacation has not been easy, as a matter of fact, it has been exhausting, but it has been so very, very, very beautiful. I still can't get over the irony of the diametrically inverse relationship between our love for naps and my children's hate for naps. I just wish we could meet somewhere in the middle. But spending these full days with our children – on the beach, and in the parks and in prayer has been so beautiful and we don't take one minute of it for granted, neither of us do.

And we've been hearing explosions from the war in Gaza throughout the day and the night. A constant reminder that when it comes to life in Israel there's no where that you can really run to hide, to really get away. And I really think that's a good thing because the reality of our lives here in the Holy Land, the truth of our lives here in Israel is meant to keep us awake, to keep us from falling into the illusion that life is about comfort and vacations and distractions. I mean we're on vacation, but it's real. It's real, it's integrated, it's holistic, it's meant to remind us that our lives here are not ordinary lives. We are part of a story that is larger than ourselves, a story that began with Avraham and Sarah and continues through us and our children today.

And so yes, it's exhausting, and at times it can feel a little bit scary. Only when I look at my children's beautiful faces that's the only time I feel that. But it's also holy and it's real. It is the privilege of living in the Land where every step, where every cry of a child, and every sleepless night, and every explosion in the distance, or even close, is woven into the destiny of our people. Every moment of life here helps us internalize the truth that it's all a gift. That we have no control over anything and that our fate, our lives, every single successive beat of our hearts is a gift from HaShem and we should be grateful for it. It's about internalizing the truth that our

very existence is in His Hands. And for reasons that we can't fully understand, and that the world definitely does not understand, He loves us with a great love beyond which we can't even imagine. And every moment of our lives here gives us the opportunity to come closer to God in a relationship that is based on truth and love. And I do mean love.

You know the word is thrown around so often and has come to be so twisted and distorted and diluted in the West and in the East. What is even love? And I think that if we look at this week's Torah portion, we can liberate the idea of love. We can really reclaim it, and understand it on a deeper level, and live more loving and more beautiful lives. And that's what really this Fellowship is about.

But before we launch in, I want to start by praying for our Fellowship and blessing our Fellowship. And again, thank you, Ardelle for your tireless work in assembling the prayer packet and for so many of you who are continuing to faithfully send in your prayers and your blessings.

Avinu, Malkeinu, HaShem, our Father, our King. We come before You as one family, scattered across the nations, but bound together in a covenant, a covenant with You, and in a covenant of love. Heal, HaShem, the bodies of those in pain and illness, heal their pain, heal their illness. And all those who seek Your refuah, HaShem, because only true refuah, true healing comes from You. May every surgery, treatment, and therapy be guided by Your wisdom, and may recovery come swiftly and fully. Strengthen, HaShem, please strengthen us. Strengthen all of us. We need Your strength right now, we need it. Strengthen the weary, and lift the broken-hearted, be near to those who grieve, those struggling with distance in their families, with financial loss, with loneliness, and with strained relationships. Let Your Presence be their comfort, and Your Spirit, HaShem, let that be their encouragement.

Bless the praises of our Fellowship, new jobs and restored health, and prayers answered, and safe travels, and family gatherings, children, grandchildren, moments of joy, and may gratitude overflow in every home, turning every heart toward You. Protect Israel, Your Land, and Your people from all those who rise against Her. Shield our leaders, our soldiers, and our families, and may Jerusalem know peace. And may Your Name be sanctified in Zion, throughout the world. Unite us across every border, praying with one voice. And let our lives be testimonies of faith, resilience and hope. Amen.

Now before we continue with the Fellowship, and I introduce Jeremy and Tehila, I really feel quite compelled to pause for a moment and share a great loss to the Jewish people in this time where we're facing so many losses. But this one is a little bit different. This past Shabbat morning, one of our great rabbis, Rabbi Berel Wein, passed away. I don't know how many of you have been privileged to meet him or learn from him, but I want to honor him this evening

by playing a short clip from our TV program, Tuesday Night Live in Jerusalem where Rabbi Wein joined us. But before we do, I'd like to share a testimony that deeply moved me.

I first heard the news from Rabbi Johnny Solomon who himself shared a remarkable story about Rabbi Wein, recorded by Rabbi Pesach Krohn in his book, *Illumination of the Magen*. And Rabbi Krohn recounted the conclusion of an interview he once conducted with Rabbi Wein and in the end, he asked him a striking question.

He said, "Rabbi Wein, in 40 years, you have singlehandedly produced more material than some large companies have. How do you do it? Don't you ever get tired? Don't you ever stop?"

And at that moment, he said, Rabbi Wein's expression turned serious. And then he shared an astounding story. This is what Rabbi Wein said –

"I was raised in Chicago. I am a ben yachid, an only child. And one day, in 1946, I was 11 years old and my father said, 'Berel, we're going to the airport.' I asked why, he told me that a great tzadek was coming to town and that all the rabbis were going to greet him and escort him to the shul, to the synagogue where he would speak. And I asked who this tzadek was, and he told me it was Rabbi Isaac HaLevi Herzog, the chief rabbi of eretz Yisrael. So I went with my father. And in the shul, not only were the rabbanim present, but all the Yeshiva bachurim, the students of the Yeshiva were there as well. And at that time there were about 200 boys from elementary school, and on. Many ba'alim, were there, too. Fathers of homes.

Rabbi Herzog gave a shiur, he gave a class and when it was over, he said, "And I want to talk to all of you, especially the bachurim, the young students. I just returned from Rome where I visited the pope, Pope Pious. I had with me the names of 10,000 Jewish boys and girls, many whose parents had placed them in Catholic families and institutions to save them from the Nazis. And I said to him (he said to the Pope), 'Give me back these children. These are our children and you know it. I have the names of 10,000 Jewish boys and girls. Many of them were kidnapped by your people and in truth, many of our people gave you our children because they didn't think any of them would survive the war otherwise. But you have them now, and we want them back. They are our Jewish children.'"

And the Pope said, "I can't give you even one child." I pleaded with him, but he said, "We have a rule. That if a child is baptized, we can never return him to another religion. And all these children were baptized."

I pleaded with him to return them, Rabbi Herzog said, but he refused, the pope refused. And then suddenly, Rabbi Herzog started to cry. He put down his head on the podium and wept. I was never so frightened in my life, Rabbi Wein said. Everyone in the shul was silent, listening to him cry. When he raised his head again, his face was red and he looked like a lion. He called out to us, he said, "I cannot do anything for those 10,000 children. But what are YOU going to do for the children of klal Yisrael, for the Jewish people. You have the responsibility to help raise the future children of klal Yisrael. What are you going to do about it? Are you going to remember that? Are you going to forget what I said?"

He repeated himself with emphasis Rabbi Wein said. "What are you doing? What are you going to do for the children of klal Yisrael? Are you going to remember that? Don't ever forget what I said." Rabbi Herzog stopped and all of the boys got up and marched forward to shake his hand. When he took my hand, he looked me straight in the eyes, Rabbi Wein said. And he asked, "Are you going to forget what I said? Will you remember what I said? What are you going to do for the children of klal Yisrael, for the children of the Jewish people?"

Rabbi Wein paused for a moment, then he said, "Every time I'm tired, and every time I want to put my pen down, I'm haunted by those words. What are you going to do for the children of klal Yisrael?"

Ok, so that's the story, and with that story as a backdrop, I want to play a short clip from our show, Tuesday Night Live in Jerusalem, featuring a very young, baby-faced Jeremy and Ari, sitting with Rabbi Wein as he shared just a little bit of his timeless wisdom. After the Fellowship, Tabitha will send out the full interview in the follow-up email so everyone can watch it in its entirety.

Ari



Just let me tell you, he's the founder and director of the Destiny Foundation. They have audio tapes, books, seminars, tours and some incredible documentaries that truly reveal some of the secrets that have kept the Jewish people alive for 4,000 years. So please join me in welcoming Rabbi Berel Wein.

Jeremy

You are a historian, and a rabbi. And we've had historians on before, we've had rabbis on before, but we've not yet had a rabbi that is also a historian, so here's the first question.



At the end of the book of Devarim, as the Torah is coming to a close, HaShem commands the Jewish people, “Remember the days of old, understand the occurrences of generation to generation.” Why would God command us to learn our own history?

Rabbi Wein



Well, there are a few reasons. One reason is as King Solomon said, “There’s nothing new under the sun.” The truth of the matter is that every problem that we face today has been faced before, whether that’s comforting to us or not, I don’t know, but at least the fact that we know that it has happened before should give us some strength because obviously we’ve

survived those problems.

And the second reason is that you need a backdrop. I always feel that history is our rearview mirror. That you drive in traffic and you never look in the rearview mirror, you just pull out, so you’re blind-sighted by a lot of things that happen, especially by the car that you didn’t see. But if you’re looking in the rearview mirror, if you have an idea of where you come from, and how you got here, why we’re here, etc., you can navigate it much more safely.

The Torah wants the Jewish people to realize that this is a story that’s 3,700 years old, that didn’t begin now, and it’s not dependent upon people or movements so much as it’s dependent upon the flow of history. And we’re part of that flow, and if you see it that way, so then I think you’re in a much better position to handle the problems. (end of video)

Ari

Anyways, he really was truly a very special man. Rabbi Wein played a unique role in our generation. He bridged the path between the past and the present, in connecting us with our history in a way that really few others could. And in doing so, he helped us fulfill the command in the Torah, in Devarim, which calls upon us:

Remember the days of old; understand the years of many generations; ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will explain to you.



• Deuteronomy 32:7

children after us would always know who we are.

He was an elder. You know Rabbi Wein embodied that verse. He transformed our history from something to be merely studied to something that we were able to feel and embrace and carry forward so that we and our

And the Torah again and again commands us, “Remember, remember. Do not forget. Teach.” You know we’re called upon to pass on these pivotal moments of our story. The exodus, Sinai, Amalek, as the very essence of our covenantal identity. It’s not just history, it’s an ongoing mitzvah. And Jewish survival depends on our historic memory. And perhaps what stood out the most about Rabbi Wein to all those who had the privilege of learning from him or even meeting him, was his great and abiding love for the Jewish people, which is a big part of our theme for this Fellowship, and so, it’s really fitting that we memorialize and remember him in this Fellowship.

So, may his memory be a blessing. And with that, it is my great honor to introduce my beloved friend and Rebbe, Jeremy Gimpel AND I believe also, his incredible wife, Tehila to share their hearts with you.

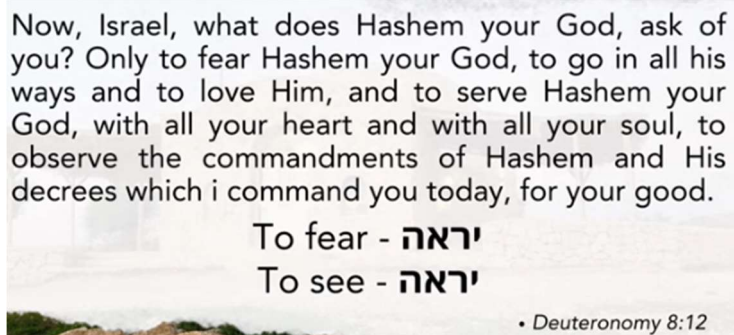
Jeremy

All right, shalom everybody, can you hear me? Excellent. Wow that was a blast from the past. It was a long time ago. It’s amazing that we were able to fill one of the largest theaters in Jerusalem with the first television show broadcasting the Torah to the world. What an innovative idea. The internet just started being brought to the world and we immediately said, “All right, let’s do it.” And we just started to do it live in Jerusalem. We were just so young. Ari, you were good looking then. Not that you’re not good-looking now, but I’m just saying, you really made it happen then.

All right, so Ari is in Ashkelon. He’s on summer vacation, bizrat HaShem, please God, my family and my little team are going to join him next week for a few days. So physically in Israel, we’re in the middle of summer vacation. But spiritually, we’re in spring training for ELUL. This is like the introduction to my favorite time of the year.

And these Torah portions, they are like the coach’s playbook. Every parsha is packed with life lessons. And as you know, the entire book of Devarim, of Deuteronomy, is Moshe’s final words to Israel. It’s like the great conclusion, the summary of the entire Torah in one book. And that’s why we’re studying it now. It’s the perfect way to prepare ourselves for the new year.

And Devarim isn't just a review, it's Moshe's legacy speech, his heart pouring into our destiny. And sometimes, a single verse encapsulates the essence of the entire Torah. Last week, we encountered the Shema – Hear O Israel, HaShem is our God, Hashem is one. It took all of the Torah, dozens of parshas to finally arrive at the one verse, the heartbeat of Torah faith. And this week, in Parashat Ekev, we're given another monumental teaching. And there's so many deep ideas that it might just skip over. So I want to just take the time and really dive deep into this one verse, in Deuteronomy chapter 10, verses 12 and 13:



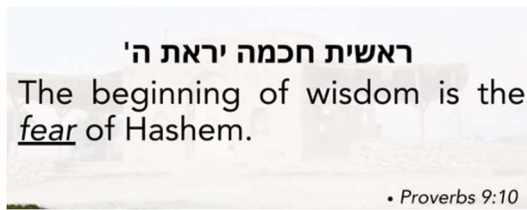
And at the beginning, it sounds like, “What does God already ask of you?” And then they list a really hard list of things. It's like – Walk in all His ways, love Him, serve Him with all of your heart, all your soul, observe the commandments. But the way that the Torah is structured in Hebrew, it

really is divided into two parts. First it says, “What does HaShem ask of you? Only to fear HaShem, your God.”

And that's really the first part of that sentence. It's almost like if you actually have yirat HaShem, everything else falls into place. But in Hebrew, what does HaShem ask of you? Only yirah. Now almost every English translation writes yirah as fear. But Hebrew already has a word for fear. It's pakat. So, what is yirah? The sages explain yirah is not fear of punishment, but a better way to understand yirah is awe, to have awe of HaShem.

The Rambam, in the Guide to the Perplexed, teaches that awe is born when you contemplate the greatness of God's creation and recognize our own smallness in relation to the Creator. That really gives you awe. But there's something deeper. In Hebrew, the word yirah shares a root with the word ra'ah, which means to see. So yirah is actually about vision, it's how we perceive reality. And so to live with yirah is to open our spiritual eyes. What is God asking of us? To see the world through spiritual eyes. It's to see the world, not as chaos and chance, but as a Divine masterpiece, where every encounter, every struggle, every joy is infused with God's Presence.

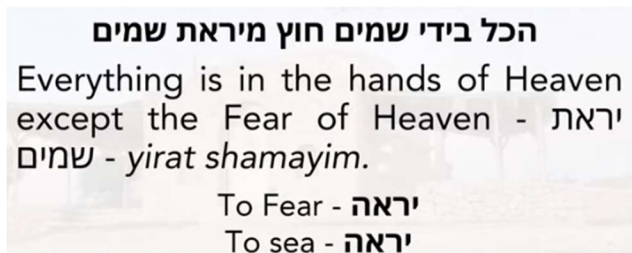
King Solomon gave us the key to understand how to build this world. In Proverbs, chapter 9, verse 10 it says it like this:



Wisdom begins with yirah, with perception, not with fear. Seeing HaShem in everything. You remove HaShem from your vision and wisdom collapses. Families break down, societies crumble, we see it today in the West where the very instinct for life is

withering. The birth rates are not even enough to sustain civilization in most European countries. And even the United States of America is right on the edge there. The more secular a society becomes, they just stop making children.

And yirah, when you see the world with spiritual vision, everything falls into place. Marriage works, raising children works, communities flourish, because we see beyond the moment into the eternal. Our sages crystalize one of the most profound ideas and phrases in all of Jewish history. It's in Brachot, and it says like this:



Again, fear is yirat shamayim, so everything is in the hands of it, except the ability to see heaven. If you translate the word yirah into fear, you're missing the much deeper message. Yirah is to see, so so much of our life is out of our control. Our health, our

wealth, our circumstances, it's all in God's Hands. The one thing we have is how we see it. Do we see life as random suffering or part of a larger plan? Do we see our challenges as meaningless or as the sculpting Hand of God making us stronger, humbles, closer to Him? That choice, that perception, is yirat shamayim. That is all that God asks of us, to let Him into our life, to see His Hand at work in our world, to open our eyes and to see the world with Messiah eyes, with Mashiach eyes. To see the godliness in everything, that's all that God is asking us to do.

By then, of course you want to keep the Torah. Of course you want to follow His commands, you want to live with Him in your life. All we can do is actually activate our soul through our eyes and see the world with godly eyes. To see godliness in everything is to stand in awe and to know that we're partners with HaShem in bringing redemption to the world.

So right now, Israel is at a crossroads. What are we going to do with Gaza? Will we have yirat shamayim, will we have the ability to see God at work, will we have the ability to see this as a part of a historic process, or will our leaders look at reality in godlessness, make choices based on seemingly rational, statistical analyses, and if we take God out of the picture, we will have no wisdom. And without a doubt make mistakes. And right now, the leaders of Israel are saying,

“We don’t want to take over Gaza. We’re looking for another Arab entity that will run Gaza, that’s not the Palestinian Authority and that’s not the Chamas.” And I’m sorry, but Gaza is a part of the God-given Land of Israel. And Israel shouldn’t give it away to anyone. It should declare sovereignty, it should be under Israel’s supervision. Any other plan is doomed to fail.

But we’re being called right now to see reality with Mashiach eyes and choose what is truly best for Israel in the region. The stronger Israel becomes, the more of its Promised Land it controls, the more peace and prosperity will be brought to all peoples in the region, and ultimately to all peoples in the world.

And just like that, it’s true for our own personal lives. In so many ways, that’s what the Torah is all about. Yirat shamayim, seeing heaven’s hand on earth and responding to every interaction, to every encounter with that perspective. That’s all that God asks of us, is how we see the world. That will bring a new blessing into your life, it will bring a new blessing into the world, it will bring a blessing onto everything.

And if there’s anyone that’s brought that blessing into my life, a person that always is somehow able to see the good, someone who is always able to see HaShem at work and in the most challenging times, always be like the rock of Israel that I’m able to lean on, that we’re able to somehow get through the most challenging times together, it is my dear wife, Tehila Gimpel. And so with that, I would love to introduce her to you and it is an honor because she has a real banger today. She is going to blow your minds with the Torah she has to teach. So hold on, just one second.

Tehila

Hi guys, life on the frontier. I just got a phone call. They’re about to knock down all the electricity right where we are. So, we’re going to learn Torah fast. I hope you guys are doing well and I apologize in advance if we get cut off, Ari will have to take over until they turn on the electricity again. That’s farm life.

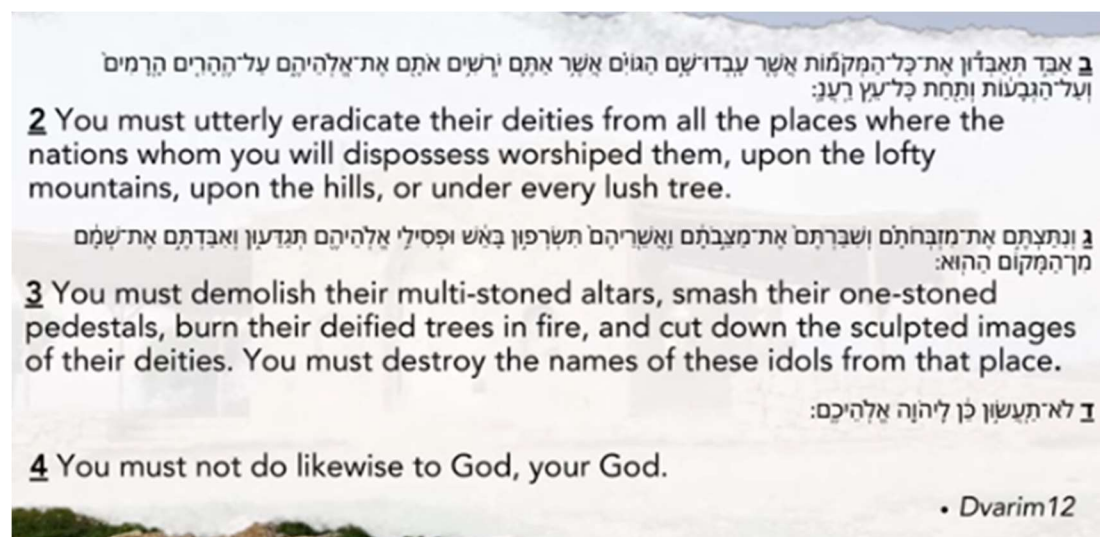
Ok, in this coming week’s portion of Re’eh, there is this very interesting emphasis on the Temple worship being concentrated in HaShem’s holy place. One second, Jeremy, the electric guy is calling you. Ok, sorry guys. I’m sorry, let me start again and try to get my concentration back. Very stressful.

So the Torah portion this week of Re’eh is talking a lot about God’s will that the Temple worship be concentrated and focused on the Holy Place that He chooses, the place where the Temple’s

going to be built and where we're going to do the service that so many portions in the Torah have been detailing how to do the Temple worship.

When you look at these verses, there are a few really perplexing things. Ok, this is going to sound a little strange, but just bear with me. Sometimes when I'm studying Torah, I like to play a little game called, "What if I was God?" I made it up, it's very catchy. So as I read the verses and I think, "If I was God, what would I have written?" And then I compare that to what was actually written, and then I try to see, what is HaShem teaching me that I wouldn't have been able to figure out myself. Right? Like when we have our own limited, human logic, and the Torah is given to us to take us farther, to take us deeper than we would have been able to get on our own. So what is the godly perspective that I'm being shown in the Torah that I wouldn't have been able to achieve otherwise? Sometimes we're kind of on the same page as God, right? Like don't murder, don't steal, even societies that don't have the Torah have figured out not to kill and not to steal. But a lot of times the Torah is counter to our simple intuitive assumptions. And those are the places where I like to ask myself, "Ok, what is God's unique message to me here from the Torah?"

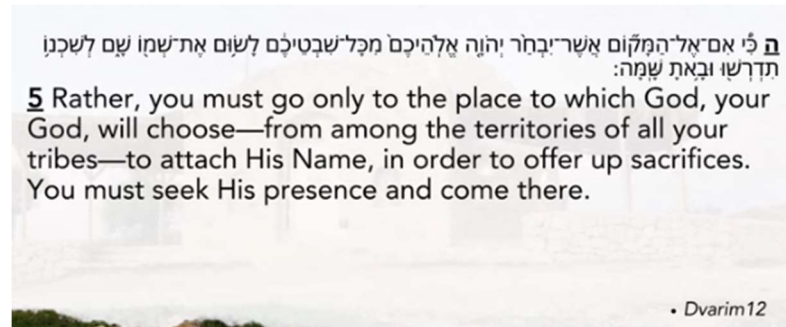
So I want to look in this coming week's portion. Now, play the game with me for a second. What if you're God? Ok, we're going to go to the Land, what do you do?



Pretty tough words.

Now, if you were God, what would be the next verse? Like what are you not supposed to do to God, our God, based on that whole context, right? I would guess that it means, pretty obvious here, don't destroy, smash, burn, do all those bad things to our places of worship of HaShem.

Like be really respectful and cautious and careful, right? Like if God is saying, “Here is one thing. Make sure that you don’t do that to MY stuff.” Wouldn’t that be obvious? But that’s actually not what the next verses says. That was verse 4, “You must not do likewise to God,” now what does verse 5 say?



So what now, by reading this verse, what did God mean when He said, “Don’t do that.” What He meant was, don’t do what they did, which was to worship their gods on the high places and in the low places, and in the trees, and in the mountains, and

in the valleys.

That’s kind of surprising. Like you know, if you’ve every been to any Muslim mosques, mosques are always built right on top of where there used to be a synagogue or where there used to be a church, right? Isn’t that what you would expect? HaShem would say like, “Yes, destroy those places and then build a synagogue there, and then be really careful not to burn that.”

But that’s not what He’s saying. He’s saying, “Don’t build a lot of places of worship like those nations. You need to go to the one place where God will choose.” Now if I was God, wouldn’t I want people to worship me everywhere? Like the more worship, the better, right? Like wouldn’t I want people to be more religious, wouldn’t that make them more godly if they had more places of worship? Wouldn’t they like remember to be good people and remember to do the commandments?

God is assuming here that people will want to worship and build places of worship. They’re going to want to be close to their homes so they can worship as conveniently as possible. And God is like, “Nah, three times a year come see Me, don’t call Me, I’ll call you.” Meaning, “Don’t come so often, three times a year will be great. You don’t need like a neighborhood synagogue, it’s fine. Just come to that one place like when you get a chance.”

So, then when you read that, you’re like, “Wow,” your mind is like, “Oh my gosh, well that one place must be really holy. I can’t wait to go there. I want to go there. I wonder where it is?” And now, where is this magical place that God is so concerned that we only go there and never go anywhere else. What is the place?

Again and again and again in this portion, we don't even know what the Place is. I'm just going to show you some examples. Look in verse 11:

11 Regarding the place to which God, your God, will choose to attach His Name, there you must bring all that I am commanding you: your ascent-offerings; your peace-offerings; your tithes; the first fruits elevated by your hand; and all the choice objects of your sacrificial vows that you vow to offer up to God.

Later on, in 13 it says:

• Dvarim12

Later on, in 13, it says:

עַל־הַשָּׁמַר לְךָ פֶּרֶת־תַּעֲלָה עַל־תֵּיבָה בְּכָל־מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר תֵּרְאֶה:
13 Take heed not to offer up your ascent-offerings at any site you see fit,
יֵד כִּי אִם־בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר יְהוָה בְּאַחַד שְׁבֵטֶיךָ שֵׁם תַּעֲלָה עַל־תֵּיבָה וְשֵׁם תַּעֲשֶׂה כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֶנִּי מְצַוֶּה:
14 but only in the place that God will choose, located in territory belonging to one of your tribes. There must you offer up your ascent-offerings, and there must you do all that I am commanding you.

Where is the Place? God will chose. Located in a territory belonging to one of your tribes, which one of your tribes? I don't know. I can bring you a million more examples. Verse 18:

18 Rather, you, your son, your daughter, your bondman, your bondwoman, and the Levite of your cities may eat these portions and tithes before God, your God, i.e., within the place that God, your God, will choose. You must rejoice before God, your God, in all your endeavors.

Again and again, yeah, the Place, we'll figure it out later. HaShem is like, "It's so important to go to this one Place," and you're so excited to hear, what is the

one Place? God's like, "Yeah, we'll figure it out, we'll cross that bridge when we get there. I don't know, we'll figure it out."

It gets really wild when it comes to eating meat. Because in the desert, we only ate manna, except when they ate meat, only in the context of sacrifices. So people actually didn't know if they would ever be able to eat meat like just at a regular neighborhood barbecue or if all meat would have to be eaten in the context of Temple worship.

So then, the verses go on to say it's permissible to eat meat, not in the context of any worship or any sacrifice because it's too far away. In verse 21 it says:

21 If the place to which God, your God, chooses to attach His Name will be distant from you, you may slaughter of your cattle and flocks that God has given you in accordance with the method that I commanded you to use, and you may eat in your cities according to your every desire.

We don't know where it is yet. Meaning a person might want to only eat meat in holiness, and God's like, "Yeah, you don't need

to bother troubling yourselves all the way to that Place, we don't know where that Place is, so you can eat meat like on the neighborhood corner, it can just be as much as you desire, as long as you do it the right way."

If I was God, wouldn't I want more things done in holiness? Like more meals to be done in worship? More worship, more good, right? That just seems so obvious. And God's like, "Don't worry about it, you got it, it's just food. You don't need an altar."

And you know, we often associate more devout is like making more of every moment in your life holy. And the less you want to do that, then the less devout you are. Like we all know people who go to synagogue only on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Or Christians that only go to church on Christmas and New Year's and the rest of the year is like, whatever. We think of that as less religious than a person who goes to their place of worship every week. So you're like, "What is going on here?"

And what's even more insane...I'm sorry, HaShem, I'm sorry, it's not insane. What's even more surprising, He says, "All of this dedication is for a Place that we don't even know where it is. Not even sure...I mean HaShem knows everything, so He knows where it is, but He's sure making it seem like He doesn't know yet where it is.

So now let's go even deeper. You guys, and me, we all know the Place is Jerusalem, right? But imagine yourself as people in the book of Devarim, in the book of Deuteronomy. You don't know where the holy city is. There are a lot of candidates if you're just like living in the desert right now. They've learned about Hebron, where Avraham bought it for our fathers. We learned about Shechem where we slaughtered the Shechem people. We learned about Beit El, where Ya'acov had the ladder going up to heaven. There're places where Avraham built altars, in Alon Moreh, Be'er Sheva. I mean there a lot of pretty fair candidates.

We also know in the back of our minds that the sacrifice of Isaac was on Mount Moriah, but it doesn't even say in the Torah that Mount Moriah was in Jerusalem. It's not obvious to me that the people in the book of Devarim even knew where Mount Moriah was, or that it's more important than all those other cool places.

And when you even think about it a little bit more, Jerusalem is actually the least likely place. If you look at a place like Hebron or Shechem, we actually acquired those in the book of Genesis, like pretty strongly. Mount Moriah, not so much. There was like the sacrifice of Isaac, and then Abraham left. He didn't buy it, he didn't conquer it. And throughout the times of Joshua and Judges, we don't even hear anything about Jerusalem. Who comes to conquer it? David. That means it was unconquered. It was a Jebusite city. It had a king. No one actually thought to conquer Jerusalem for like hundreds of years. Jerusalem is so central to our biblical understanding of destiny that it's hard to imagine that there was a time in biblical history where that was not obvious.

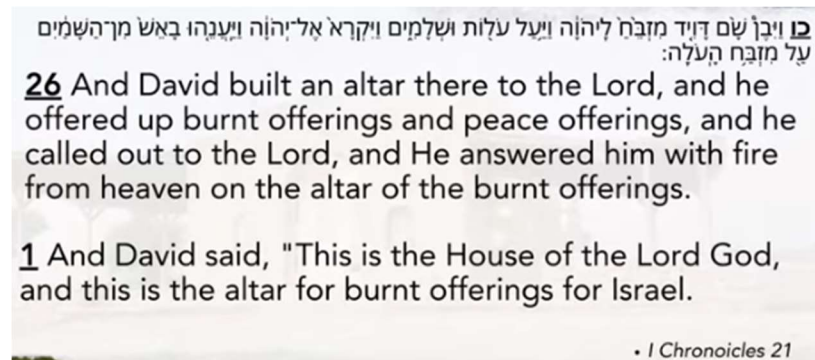
Think about all of our unfolding destiny right now in the Land of Israel. What do we call that? We call that Zionism. What is Zionism? Zionism is Jerusalem. We might as well call it Jerusalemism. But in fact, when you read the Torah, it's not clear at all. The first Zionists, the first people to come and conquer the Land didn't seem to pay any attention to Zion. And when David rolls around, there's a Jebusite king, it's a walled city, no one seems to have cared about it, it doesn't belong to any one tribe because it's on the border between Benjamim and Judah, so it's not an easy choice.

You know we once lived in an apartment. You have some like water damage. Try to figure out who should pay for that when it's in between two apartments. It's like in between two tribes. Who's going to be in charge? Who's going to take care of it? And the tension is even deeper because it's on the border between Judah and Benjamin, that goes down to the heart of the tension between Rachel and Leah, between the house of Saul and the house of David. This is not the most likely candidate. David makes his home there, but it's still not clear that that's going to be God's dwelling Place for all of eternity.

And it's incredible. God is saying, "Don't worship Me so much. The main thing is to come to this one special spot, My heart of hearts, My Holy of Holies, my Divine choice, where I am going to choose to place my Name." But like, "Yeah, whatever, we'll figure out what it is."

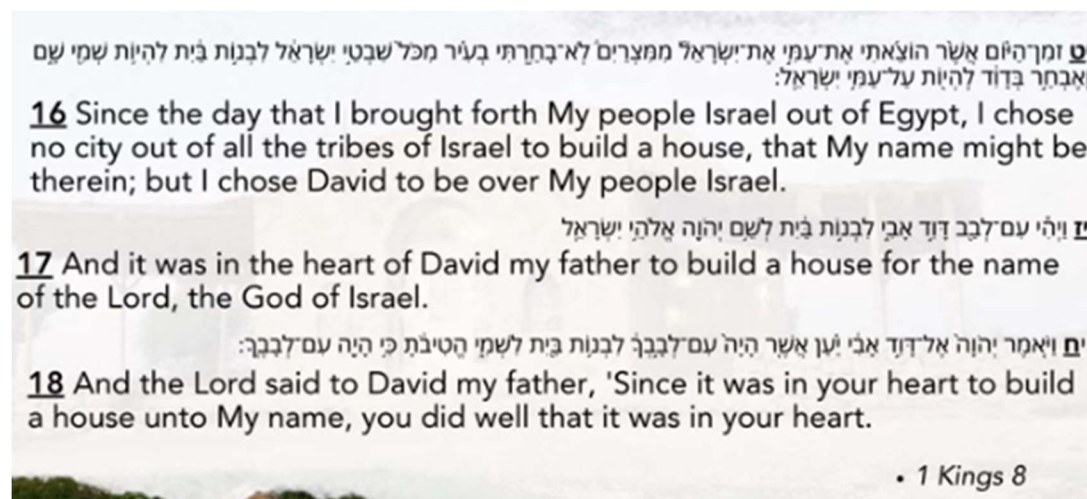
Hundreds of years after these verses in Deuteronomy, I want to show you what happens. Let's look in 1 Chronicles, chapter 21, verse 26. David builds an altar there to the Lord. He goes to this Place which we know later to be Mount Moriah, to this guy's threshing floor, and he offers

up a burnt offering and a peace offering, he calls out to the Lord, and what happens? God answer him with a fire from heaven on the altar of the burnt offering. And so David says, a few verses later:



So literally for like 400 years, there are these temporary locations. We have Shiloh, Shiloh is destroyed, the ark is wandering around after it's in the Philistines, and then it's going around from house to house, tent to tent. Only

when David goes out to seek out, to make a House for God, it becomes clear, what is this Place that HaShem has chosen. It's really brought to bear in Solomon's speech in 1 Kings, chapter 8, verse 16:



Meaning, God is saying, "I didn't choose up until now." What made God choose all of a sudden to make Jerusalem His holy Place?

God says, "I didn't just choose a place. You chose to WANT to know what I choose. And then you were able to hear Me and discover what was My will."

There's something so profound here. In our portion, HaShem is saying, "I am going to choose a Place." But He doesn't tell us what it is. What are we supposed to understand here? I think we really need to look closely at this because God bringing His Presence to His ultimate dwelling place is pretty much the definition of redemption, right? Like this is what we're all hoping for,

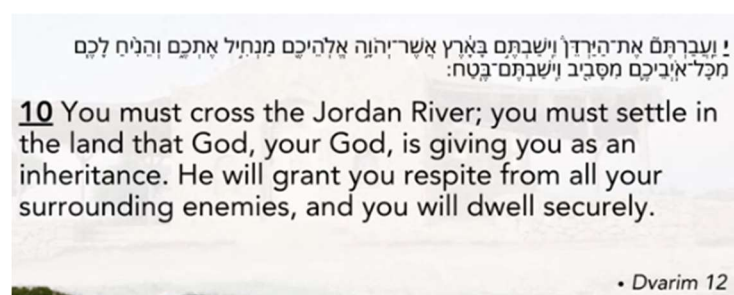
this is what we're all waiting for, this is the end game, right? What we're all hoping for is a time when God's Presence becomes completely apparent in the world and there's a holy Temple and our hearts turn to it as a conduit of connection with HaShem. That's the end game, so it's really important to understand. Let's try to understand, what is being told to us in these verses?

So I think the first thing that's really important to notice here is that finding this Place and worshiping in this one Place together is very important. More than God cares about quantity, like worshipping God a lot, or in a lot of places, or very often, it supersedes everything else to find a Place to worship together. Togetherness and having one Place that we concentrate – God prefers that quality over quantity. And that is a really important step in the redemption process.

If that's so important, why not tell us where to go? I think the deeper message, when we keep on digging, is that where the place is, is secondary in its importance to the process of seeking the Place. Hundreds of years HaShem didn't choose the Place. You know, I'll say something. There's a very deep conflict within the Jewish people around Zionism and the return to the Land. The secularist Zionist said, "Forget about God, we just need to find a place to be." Most of the religious Jews said, "No, no, no, we should not make any effort. When God wants to redeem us, the Temple will just fall out of the sky."

The religious Zionist movement said, "We need to make our effort and hope and pray that if we put ourselves out and act in faith that HaShem will make us successful, HaShem will move this movement forward, HaShem will redeem us when we step out to try to bring the redemption ourselves. I think when you look closely at the verses, you're really seeing that that's what's hidden here.

The opening verse to this section in Devarim is...what do we need to do before we cross into the Land? We cross the Jordan River, now look at this verse really, really carefully. We always kind of read it as one big block. But I think when we break it apart, we can really see a deep message here.



Do you see the order in that verse? First you cross the river, it says, "You must cross the Jordan River, that's on you. You want redemption? The first step comes from you alone, you cross the Jordan River, you have to go into the Land, yourself."

The second step God says is that you have to settle the Land that God is giving you as an inheritance. To start settling, you have to do that, too. You're only going to be successful if you recognize that this is an inheritance given to you by God. But then the third step, the end game, the actual peace, the respite from all of our enemies, that comes from God. That's a gift. After you've done your part, He will grant you respite from all your surrounding enemies.

I think we see this as a roadmap, and we're seeing the same thing with the Temple, and with David. What is Solomon essentially say? It's that when David had it on his heart to build a Temple, then HaShem revealed His will to choose that Place. The first effort had to come from David and then God, after hundreds of years of just being an unknown mystery, finally revealed His will. When you ask God to show you His will, He will show you His will. He's not going to show it to you on your own if you're just sitting there waiting.

So when we ask, "Why didn't God choose the Place that He said He would choose, I imagine, people all those years of the Judges and Joshua saying like, "God, why haven't you shown us the Place?" I imagine God saying, "Well, no one asked!" David was the first one to have it on his heart, to look for the Place. Saul was king, we don't see anywhere that Saul was wondering where should be God's Temple. The Judges in the book of Judges ruled – they didn't ask either. David said, "HaShem, where do You want Your home?" And then the fire came down and God revealed it to him. And then it was clear what was the Place He had chosen.

I think it's just an unbelievably profound lesson in life, that HaShem will only give you what you make an effort to achieve and HaShem will only reveal to you His will when you really ask. And you need to really want to know because it might not be what you want, you might not get the answer might want. It might be that HaShem wants from you something that's going to be really hard for you. Like Jerusalem, of all of the cities was a very difficult city to conquer and a difficult city to maintain. It was a border city and had all these problems. You might not get the easy answer but you will probably get an answer. But you will only get the answer if you really, really have it on your heart to want to know. So, we don't have the luxury of sitting around.

And I want to just finish the words incredible words of Nachmanides, the Ramban, he says that this is going to be the fundamental roadmap for redemption. He says:

You shall seek His dwelling place: you shall journey for Him from distant lands and ask, "What is the way to the house of Hashem?" and say one to another, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of Hashem, to the house of the G-d of Jacob" (*Isaiah* 2:3), like the expression "To Zion they will inquire, the way—here are their faces turned" (*Jeremiah* 50:5).

• Ramban Nachmanides on Devarim 12

In order to come to redemption, you need to seek it. You need to truly want it. And then he quotes the Midrash and the Sifre where it says:

"You shall seek – seek through the prophet."
Could it be that you must wait until the prophet tells you?
The verse says, "You shall seek His dwelling and go there"—seek and find, and afterwards the prophet will tell you.
And so you find with David, etc.

And according to the truth (on the level of sod):
"You shall seek His dwelling" means "You shall seek His honor,"
and go there to appear before the Master, Hashem, G-d of Israel.
And from this the sages said "Shechinah."

• Sifrei (Re'eh 8)

Maybe we just need...we can only move forward to biblical destiny if a prophet is here to tell us.

Seek and find and afterwards, a prophet will tell you.

Meaning it is incumbent upon every individual to step out and try to find their way toward bringing redemption, only then, you can't say I need somebody to tell me God's will, I need a prophet...we need to actually step out. Seek HaShem's will, do what we can to do His will and only then will there ever be a prophet to come and tell us.

He goes right back to what we're talking about. And he says, "According to the truth," when the Ramban says the truth, he means there's a mystical secret," he says, "You shall seek his dwelling," means you shall seek His honor. When you really want to bring God's honor into the world, that is what it means to try to find a dwelling Place for Him. And from that will come the Hebrew word of Shechina, God's Dwelling in the world.

And then the Ramban is looking closely at the verse that we started off with.

ה' כִּי אִם־אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל־שְׁבִטֵיכֶם לָשׂוּם אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שָׁם לִשְׁכֵנִי
תִּדְרָשׁוּ וּבָאתֶם שָׁמָּה

5 Rather, you must go only to the place to which God, your God, will choose—from among the territories of all your tribes—to attach His Name, in order to offer up sacrifices. You must seek His presence and come there.

He says, “We always think about what the Place is, but we don’t focus on the Words of HaShem to seek His Presence. We have to go to the Place, the process is to seek God’s Presence.

The seeking is the process. That is the main part of the story and then HaShem will reveal His will. This is the roadmap for the future.

So, I want to just finish with showing one interesting thing that I noticed. Once I had this understanding that this is a Place that God chooses because David sought to understand what God’s will was, it made me go back to the very first appearance at Mount Moriah. Why did HaShem choose Mount Moriah? I think that the seed is planted in the very verse when Abraham named Mt. Moriah.

14 And Abraham named that place, The Lord will see, as it is said to this day: On the mountain, the Lord will be seen.

• Genesis 22

That seems kind of strange, right? He called it the Mountain of the Lord will see because the Lord will be seen. But seeing and being seen are not the same thing. They’re kind of the opposite. I think right here is planted in that

first understanding of the essence of Mt. Moriah is that the Lord will see, but it’s a dual relationship. He will be SEEN when He sees us seeking Him. Buried in the essence of the very Holy Place of Mt. Moriah is the secret to redemption in our national life, in our personal life, that God appears when He sees seeking for Him and desiring His Presence. It’s a relationship.

So, maybe that’s why it needs to be just one special Place. It’s not enough for each person to make an altar in their back yard where it’s convenient. Because convenient, if you have an altar in your back yard, there is no seeking. You build an altar in your back yard, there’s no traveling and yearning and going three times a year. It needs to be in Jerusalem because Jerusalem is not an easy choice, it’s a complicated choice, it’s a difficult choice.

But that is how we show HaShem that we are all in, that we are throwing ourselves into trying to seek His will and waiting to hear His answer. And perhaps that is the secret of living a life in relationship with HaShem. And maybe that’s the secret of what Israel needs to be doing now in the world. So, with that, I wish you guys...I’m so happy that the electricity didn’t go off. Whoohoo! I wish you guys a beautiful week and that we should all be seeking HaShem’s will with all of our hearts.

Ari

Amen, amen. Tehila, that is incredible, wow! I mean, maybe when you're a hammer, everything is a nail, but it just feels like everywhere I'm looking, the same thing, it's about the journey, not about the destination. It's about the seeking, it's not about the Temple, it's about the relationship. Us turning to God, God turning to us. It's like the energy of redemption is converging from every angle. And Tehila, I hope you guys understand...I mean, she is incredible. She is really an innovator. I'm like a curator, I share my thoughts, and my family. She is a Torah innovator. It's really, really hard to speak after her, and I have a lot that I want to share. But before we dive into the Torah portion, I just want to take a moment and zoom out and look at where we are as a whole in the Torah. Tehila, incredible, incredible, thank you.

Where we are in Devarim. So Moshe's long address in Devarim has a clear progression. The first three parashiot, including Ekev, are Moshe's reflections. And he's reviewing the nation's journey and preparing them to enter the Land without him. The next three focus on the mitzvot, how to live in the Land, and the final five are looking ahead. Casting their gaze to the future.

Now the opening chapters that we're reading right now, Moshe shares his deepest...I guess I want to say, worries? And he addresses them one by one. First, how will you conquer the Land without me? He recalls the episode of the spies, warning them not to repeat the same mistake of fear and faithlessness. Then shifting from conquest to life in the Land, Moshe worries about the lure of Canaanite idolatry. Now to counter this, he doesn't emphasize, interestingly, he doesn't emphasize the commandments themselves, but the experience that gave birth to them, the awe, like Jeremy said, the intimacy of Mount Sinai when HaShem, Himself came down as it were, revealed Himself, to speak directly to the people of Israel what's never been done. How could anyone trade such closeness for lifeless idols? Israel, we're bound to God in this covenant of love.

And in our parsha, in our portion, Moshe identifies another danger. Prosperity. With blessing and success comes the temptation of arrogance, the illusion that we always talk about – my strength and the might of my hands has made all this. So to humble them, he brings up their darkest failure, the golden calf. Pride cannot stand long in the shadow of that memory. The truth is, that it really helps, at least it helps me, to understand my journey more. The series of miserable failures that I think I've shared with you guys through the journey of this Fellowship as they were happening, very often. Failures, I don't want to call them failures because it's all a learning experience. Falling on my face, and sins, and divorce, and I look back in some ways, I'm more grateful for all of those dark times than I am of anything else because I know that who I became as a result of that journey, who I became while experiencing that journey is the secret

to the life of overwhelming gratitude that I am so blessed to often live. I'm not always there in that headspace, but I'm there a lot. Anyways, back to the portion. When Moshe closes this section, his words turn tender and personal, almost pleading. It says, love HaShem, cling to Him, let yourself be absorbed into Him.

This is the heart of his final guidance for how to live in the Land. This is the Land of love, this is the Land of vulnerable, the Land of humility. And without that we simply won't make it here. Now this parsha is so rich, it's almost impossible to even know where to begin on the whole thing, but I want to zoom in where I zoomed in for myself because each Torah portion is divided into seven Aliyot, seven sections. Only for the Sabbath reading in the synagogue. And when someone is called up to bless for an Aliyah, when they ascend to the Torah, they make the blessing and then that first of the seven sections is read, and then the second section is read, and seven sections are read. And so, it always feels at least to me like the particular words of that particular section are being given to the person that was called up. So you're not always called up. You're only one of seven people in the whole synagogue that's called up. Sometimes there's a hundred, two hundred people. So you're probably not going to be called up.

But this week, I was new in this synagogue in Ashkelon, and very often it's part of hospitality, you go up to the new guy and you want to give them an Aliyah. So I was called up for the 5th Aliyah, and I received it as a message, it was straight to my heart. And my kids had just walked into the Ashkelon synagogue, the moment that I ascended to the Torah. And so I recited the blessing with Shiloh in my right arm, and holding Dvash's hand with my left. And after reciting that blessing, and the Torah reader began to sing these beautiful verses, the Word struck me as the most precise, most powerful message I could possibly hear right now. And I believe they're not only for me, but for all of us. We're all learning and experiencing things for each other.

And so, I want to begin there and I'm going to try to not make this all too long. But Devarim, the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 10, verses 12 through chapter 11, verse 9. That was the 5th portion that I was called up for. And as I stood there, receiving these words into my heart, I couldn't help but to feel that they may have been the most powerful words in the whole Torah. I know you can't say that, it's not right to say that, who are we to say...every Word really has equal power, but to me, that's how it felt.

So the portion begins with the verse that Jeremy said, that I've always been...I get intrigued by this verse. And it says:

And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you? Only this: to revere the Lord your God, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, keeping the Lord's commandments and laws, which I enjoin upon you today, for your good.

• Deuteronomy 10:12-13

Now friends, let's slow down and take a second to reflect on those words together. I'm interested to know if they do the same thing to you that they did to me. And now, oh Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you? It sounds like...so simple, almost casual. What does God ask? Only this.

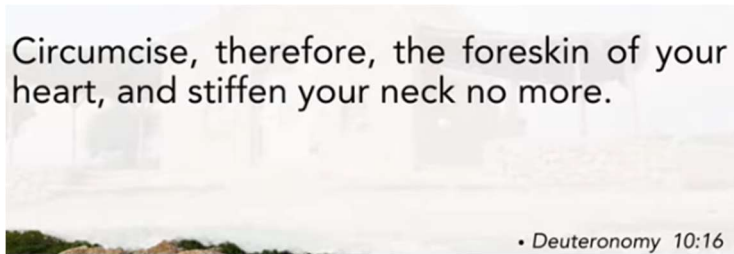
But then it comes, this breath-taking list. To fear Him, to walk in His ways, to love Him, to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul. To keep His commandments. That's not a very small list. That is everything. That's the totality of what it means to be a Jew, to be a lover of God, a follower of the Bible, to be alive, to stand in covenant with the Creator of the Universe.

But notice something a little subtle here. The verse begins with the words, "And now," v'atah Yisrael, and now. So our sages teach us that this is Moshe speaking directly to each of us, to each generation, as if to say, "Don't get lost in the past, don't be paralyzed by what was, don't worry about what might be, right now, in this moment, what does God ask of you? To bring your whole being into that relationship with Him."

And that's how I felt there standing at the Torah, that these Words weren't ancient history, they weren't poetry, they weren't philosophy, they were alive and directed straight at me, burning into my heart and it struck me. Everything here revolves around love, reverence, awe, fear, those are all things, yes, walking in His ways, yes. But at the center, the life blood is love. And the Torah doesn't let that love remain some vague, abstract feeling. It tells us exactly what it means to love, to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul. Not half, not when convenient, not when inspired, not with holding back pieces of our heart here and there, parts of our faith here and there, but the totality of who we are.

This is something I really have been having to tap into a lot lately. I don't always share with you ALL that I'm going through and we're going through at the Farm, but there have been times recently where it feels like we really may stand on the verge of losing everything. And when you have children, it's like, that's scary. It's much scarier than it used to be, but I had a lightning bolt moment come into my heart and I realized God doesn't every take anything from us. He gives us the opportunity to give to Him. And when I reframed it that way, that nothing is going to be taken from me. HaShem isn't going to take anything from me, but He may give me the opportunity to give it all to Him.

And to me, that is the type of reciprocal love that I feel like in some ways is unique to the Land of Israel, at least in the potency. Anyways, a few verses later, after we get to this, we're told how to actually make that possible. It says:



Circumcise your hearts, right? Don't be so stubborn or stiff-necked. I believe that's the Torah way of saying, remove the callous, you know peel away the hardness. Don't let the cynicism and the hurt and the

fear keep you from loving fully. The heart in its natural state tends to protect itself, to build walls, again to develop callouses, to stay stiff. But HaShem says, "I want a heart that is soft, tender, a heart that is vulnerable before Me, because only then can it truly love."

And that's the spiritual work. That's what I thought I was being asked to hear in that Aliyah. Not just as a teaching, but as a personal command that maybe this is the moment. And NOW, and now, to do some heart surgery on myself, to soften, to let go of the layers of anger and disappointment and fear and pride and choose love. As you know, I actually consider myself a pretty loving person. I go around and I just love people, I love humanity, I am filled with love, I walk my journey very much in gratitude. But like many of us, I know that compared to where I could be, I've only just begun. Who here feels like they have a ways to go when it comes to softening and opening up their own hearts? I'm looking. Raise your hand if you feel like...ok, good. So I'm not alone here.

Good, because ultimately this isn't a private instruction for me, or for you. Moshe is speaking to all Israel and by extension to the entire world. Our mission as a people is to model a life with a circumcised heart, a heart that can truly love God, and from there, love each other. And as the Torah goes on to tell us, that only in the Land of Israel can we as a nation truly replace our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. Or at least do our part in making that happen. And what do I mean by that? What do I mean by at least do our part? Well, I think that just a few portions down the line, the Torah makes it very clear. While our Torah portion commands us to circumcise our own hearts, we should circumcise our hearts, meaning to soften our own resistance and stubbornness and spiritual insensitivity. Towards the end of Deuteronomy, and therefore the end of the Torah when Moshe is looking forward into the future of the nation, he again speaks of this cardiac circumcision. There's a group I'm in actually that's called "The Cardiac Circumcisors." I don't know if I told you that, I know it's a crazy names, but it's these guys who are really seeking to serve God and to do this journey. Anyways, he speaks of this, but

this time there's a fundamental difference. Let's continue looking in Deuteronomy, but this time in chapter 30, verse 6:

And Hashem your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your offspring, to love Hashem your God with all your heart and all your soul, so that you may live.



• Deuteronomy 30:6

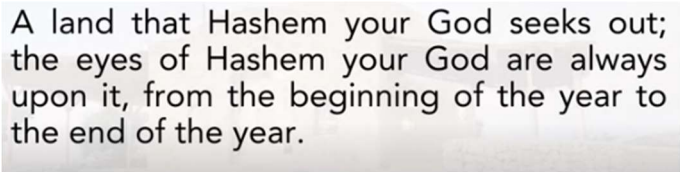
You know as you can see here, HaShem tells us that He will circumcise our hearts. This is a promise for the future, that God, Himself will remove the deeper barriers to love and closeness, granting us a purified heart capable of

true covenantal love.

And our sages teach that our task is to begin, to do everything within our reach and to the best of our ability. We must take the first steps, to return to the Land physically and geographically to the best of our ability. To root ourselves here, holistically, and spiritually, and to cultivate openness and humility and to strive to walk with God on this journey of this Land with all of our strength and all of our trust. And once we do our part, we can know with absolute certainty that HaShem will do His part. He will complete the work at a higher level, especially in our times, the days of redemption, transforming our inner being so that love of God flows within us naturally and permanently and without obstruction.

Because while we are commanded to begin, there are depths of pain, trauma, and exile. There are blockages of the heart that no human effort alone can remove. We're just people. Only God can perform that deep surgery of the soul. And the Tzfat Emet actually explains that the foreskin of the heart is the dullness that covers and hides the inner light of our soul. In exile, that covering is thick and heavy and it's just hard to pierce. But in eretz Yisrael, the air itself, I guess it likes softens us up. If you've been here before, you can testify to this. That if we have an open and yearning heart, even just the air itself, the air of the Land sharpens us and refines us and helps strip it away and allows the light of our soul to shine. Like it just can't in any other land.

But at the climax of history, HaShem will remove it entirely, and then love of God will be as natural as breathing. And where will this surgery take place? It's going to take place in the Land of Israel. The prophets say that the final redemption will sprout from Zion. Here, in the Land of prophecy, HaShem promises to transform our hearts into vessels of eternal love. But as we said, it's only in the Land that we can truly do our part as a nation. For as we read just a few verses into the six Aliyah portions that the Land of Israel is quote:

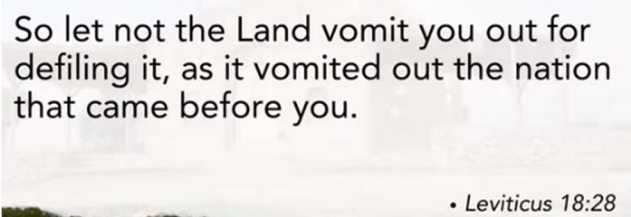


A land that Hashem your God seeks out; the eyes of Hashem your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

I just had lunch with my friend Tuly Weiss. He said that that verse is such a part of his entire world, life journey, is that verse.

Because our sages teach that eretz Yisrael is not like the other lands. It doesn't just give, it demands, it mirrors the spiritual state of its inhabitants. If our hearts are blocked, we may be able to live here physically for some time, but we will remain spiritually exiled. Only with an open, circumcised heart can we truly feel and experience the holiness that radiates from this Land.

You see, in exile, a Jew can survive with half a heart. Foreign lands allow space for compromise and for self-delusion, and for the illusion of control, and a Jew can live with a measure of cognitive dissonance there and still get by. But here in eretz it's different. The Land itself demands truth. It does not tolerate, it doesn't tolerate half measure. Here the very soil, the very air calls us to strip away illusions and live with a whole heart before HaShem. The Land is alive, right? In Leviticus 18:28, I've thought about this many times.



So let not the Land vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that came before you.

• Leviticus 18:28

Eretz Yisrael cannot abide by impurity. It doesn't tolerate falseness. It doesn't tolerate evil, disgustingness. Not from the Canaanites, and not from the Israelites.

There's nothing special and unique about us or do we get any dispensations. It doesn't work that way. Living here calls for a deeper covenant.

And just as the brit milah, the circumcision marks our bodies, milat halev, a circumcision of the heart marks our inner essence. And in this Land, the inside and the outside must align. The covenant is not only written on our flesh, but inscribed upon our hearts. And in the diaspora, a Jew can still delude himself into thinking he can somehow escape his Jewish identity and he can slip away from the fate and destiny of his people. But here in the Holy Land, there's just no illusion like that. And you know this. If anyone knows this, it's all of you. Because you haven't only been watching from afar. You have been on this journey with us. You've been living this story with us. You have shared our lives, you have shared our pain. You've sat with us in the shelters as our children trembled in fear. You've seen with your own eyes how the nations of the world have turned against us, shockingly, almost unbelievably. I'm still shocked by it. The United Nations, world leaders, universities, twisting morality itself, siding with Chamas jihadist terrorists while condemning Israel for defending our children and defending life. You've

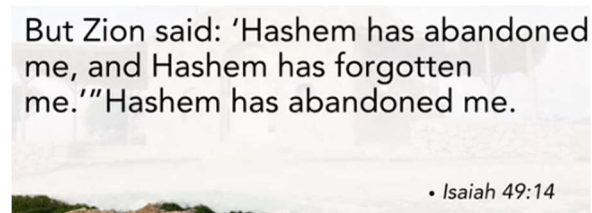
witnessed our people mocked for resisting terror, scorned for defending life against this death cult. And really like castigated for daring to survive.

And in this fire, HaShem's Words echo – My eyes are always upon this Land. But to survive here, to thrive here, to feel Him here, we must peel away the coverings of the heart. And here the Haftarah, the portion of the prophets comes rushing in like a life line to help us understand one of the great impediments that face the nation of Israel both today and in biblical times, on a personal and on a national level. And I think all of us feel this on some level, at some point. And it's an impediment in truly opening our hearts to really experiencing HaShem's love. I know that I've felt this before, so I'll speak for myself.

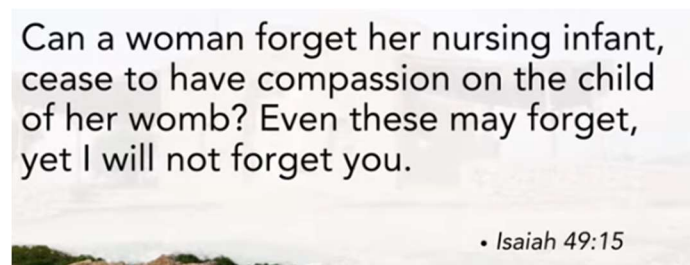
Rabbi Winkler (?) beautifully shared the first time the Torah calls us, am Yisrael, the nation of Israel, is in the book of Exodus, in Shemot when Pharaoh feared us and enslaved us. And it's there that HaShem declared: Israel is my firstborn son.

This was not only a message to Pharaoh, but a message to us, to remind us that in one of our lowest points in history, when we were steeped in slavery and idolatry and defilement...in the depths of it all, HaShem is saying, "You are my children." And this truth continues. Moshe says here in the book of Devarim, in Deuteronomy: You are children to HaShem, your God.

And in our Haftarah, Yeshayahu, Isaiah addresses a broken Israel. And you really need to read this Haftarah portion, a broken Israel that cries out in despair:



HaShem has abandoned me, they felt too sinful, too stained, too betrayed by history, too much of betraying of God, Himself, to really continuing in believing in His love. And the prophet thunders back:



Can a mother forget her nursing baby? You Israel, are that baby, you are HaShem's child, you can never be forgotten, you can never be abandoned. This is circumcision of the heart. To strip away the despair and the hopelessness,

the coverings of unworthiness, and to believe in the deepest way that HaShem's love for us is eternal and unshakeable.

The nations say, "You're abandoned." The Tucker Carlson's, the Candace Owen's, "You're abandoned. You're not the Israelites, you're isolated in the world, you're condemned." And what does the Land say? "Open your heart and remember. You're the children of HaShem." Our enemies are just trying to fill us with fear and despair. And the Haftarah says, "You can never be forgotten." HaShem's love is as fierce as a mother's for her child. The circumcision of the heart in these times is to feel the brokenness but not to let it harden us. To cry, but not to despair. And to always remember, banim atem, we're HaShem's children.

I just want to play this video. I know there's so many of them that you've seen, but I saw this one. I wanted you just to see it, what it is, a circumcision of the heart as we're being barraged with missiles.



There they are, you know, religious Jews, secular Jews, in a bomb shelter as intercontinental ballistic missiles are shattering and shaking and destroying the buildings right above them. And they're singing and greeting the angels of peace into their Sabbath. That is a circumcised heart. That is what the Land demands to us. That's what the Land does. It does that to us.

You know the Ba'al Shem Tov taught there's nothing so whole as a broken heart. And when missiles fall, when soldiers are buried, when the world scorns us, the heart naturally breaks. And as hard as it may be to understand this, and I don't even fully understand it, that brokenness is not our undoing. It is the opening that lets HaShem in. It is the circumcision that allows His love to flow. And when the heart is open, then every siren becomes a call to prayer. And every headline of hatred becomes an invitation to deepen our bond with HaShem. And every loss becomes sanctified in His eternal covenant. Every soldier is offered on the altar of the Highest and most sacred in the Holy Temple. It may feel unbearable. You know, the danger, the loss, the hatred. But hidden in this demand is the greatest gift. HaShem, Himself, drawing us close.

And through the Haftarah, He's whispering to us, "You are my child. You're My children. I could never forget you. My eyes are always upon you from the beginning of the year to the end of the year."

So my prayer for us, my friends, is this. My prayer, HaShem, we stand before You tonight with open hearts, broken, yet whole, wounded, yet alive with faith. We have heard the words of Moshe, of Yeshayahu, of Isaiah the prophets, of our sages, and our teachers. And they all whisper the same truth. That we are Your children and You could never abandon us. HaShem, circumcise our hearts. Strip away the calluses of fear and despair and cynicism and remove the illusions and distractions that keep us numb. Make us tender before You, vulnerable, loving, and ready to cling to You in truth.

In this Land that You choose, where Your eyes are upon us always, from the beginning of the year till its end, HaShem, may we learn to live with uncovered hearts. Hearts that feel and hearts that cry, hearts that love. And may every broken moment be transformed into an opening for Your Presence to dwell within us.

Bless our Fellowship family, scattered across nations, but bound together in covenant, bound together in Your holy Land, even if geographically, physically, we may be in different places. May we become living testimonies of Your faithfulness, of Your promises, of the eternal bond between You and Israel. May every one of us in Eretz Yisrael and throughout the world carry the light of circumcised hearts shining love into the darkness.

And HaShem, we end tonight with the words of Your prophet, echoing in our souls. “Can a mother forget her nursing child? Even these may forget. Yet I will never forget you.” And may we never forget You either, HaShem. May we love You with all of our heart and soul. And may we merit to see the day when all our hearts are circumcised by You and all the world knows that You dwell in Zion forever.

And with that, my friends, allow me to bless you with the blessing of the priests of Israel. And yes, as I say every week, you know that I’m not a descendant of Aaron. I’m not a priest of Israel. But as the Torah tells us, we are a mamlechet Cohanim v’goy kadosh, a Kingdom of Priests and a holy nation. And so, in that capacity, allow me to bless all of you.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

May HaShem bless and protect you. May HaShem make His Face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May HaShem lift up His face to you and grant you peace. Amen.

Thank you, my friends. Thank you so much. I see that we’re over, but I want us to soon come together and do a Fellowship Connection and I want to hear from you. Reach out to me with

questions, with thoughts, prayers, prayer request. We're here for each other. We're a community together, and we love each other very much. And I love all of you. Shalom, Shalom.

