

Session 56
Va'etchanan – There is Nothing Else
25 July 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-7 DN1COjQ>

Ari

Shalom, everybody! I have missed you so much. I feel like it has been so long. I know it's just been a couple weeks, but I just...just seeing your faces, I really deeply enjoy scrolling through your faces before the fellowship starts. You know, Jeremy's music is playing and everyone's head is bopping around to the music. I just love seeing all of you, at least whoever turns the camera on. And I really love it when you turn your camera on. And I feel like even though we've never met in person, I'd recognize many of you if I saw you on the street which Jeremy has the privilege of actually doing right now. I'm so jealous of him. But anyways, I really believe the day will come when this fellowship evolves into a fellowship retreat on our mountain in Judea and it can happen and God-willing it will happen.

And I have a lot to share with you, but before I go on and share my heart, as you know, a student doesn't speak before his rebbe, at least not usually. And so, I'm probably more excited than you to introduce Jeremy because he's on tour. He's a holy emissary of Judea, spreading the light of Torah, him and Tehila and their kids and I haven't seen you in so long, Jeremy, and you're very missed. You're missed at the farm, you're missed by me, you're missed by Shaena, you're missed by D'vash, your whole family. And I can't wait to hear what you have to share with us. So, how are you, Jeremy? Knoxville, Tennessee.

Jeremy

Hi, we are doing excellent. Can everyone hear me? I don't know if I could see you even if you told me, is this ok? Everyone hears me? Yes, it works. Ok, excellent. And so, here we are, we're on our way to Knoxville, Tennessee. We have a six-hour drive ahead of us. And what I've done, is almost like a scientific experiment. To see how far I can push my children without them absolutely disintegrating before me. Just every day, it's been a different city. I mean, I remember the first time we got off the plane from Tel Aviv to LA. LA to Colorado and then until we finally got to our hotel in Colorado. My kids, they weren't zombies, it was just that the plug had been pulled out. They were just like out. We had to like carry them to their bed. They were just exhausted. And so, I underestimated how huge the United States is and we've just been traveling from city to city and from city to city sometimes five, six hours in the car. But, it's been amazing because our fellowship for the first time since it started in the middle of this global pandemic has transformed from being virtual to being physical. There are real people in those Zoom screens. I've seen them, I see them right now. I've seen them, it is the energy and love and the excitement that's experienced when we actually finally had a chance to meet in person. And it's been so special because people from, you know, we do one event in one city in Colorado, but then people from Kansas drove in, and people from all around the state had

come in. And then the next day we spent some time on the lake. I don't know, maybe 20 to 30 people with all of their kids came up and we were just spending time finally getting a chance to speak, finally getting a chance to know each other.

And what a beautiful move is happening here in the world that's somehow, some way, people have been pulled together. You know, I'm right now...and we found this little campsite that we've spent Shabbat in down here in Mississippi, it's like right at the border of Tennessee. And I know there's 400 campers here and all I want to do is knock on each camper and talk to the person next to me and just hear their story. And they're just so many people, it's impossible. And then you think about how vast America is.

There's 8 billion people in the world. It's just huge. And then somehow, out of 8 billion people, HaShem is pulling together this amazing tapestry of the most marvelous people all over the world. Some people live alone in a forest in Arkansas. And some people live on a farm in Texas and some people live in the city. And somehow, each one has been pulled out and interconnected with this fellowship and with the mountains of Judea. And you know, the fellowship started in a really hard time. I think it was a hard time for everyone. No one had lived through a global pandemic before. And everything was shut down and it was scary. And I feel like just out of that pain, this fellowship came out to be.

And sometimes I thought, you know, King David was so beloved, but he had such a hard life. He never had a moment's rest. He was being chased by Saul, and then he was chased by his own son Avshalom, and there were wars that he had to fight and to conquer Jerusalem. It was just constant challenges, but in those time of pain, you know King David wrote so many of the Psalms that nowadays when we're in times of pain, he heals us. And through his pain, he brought healing to the rest of the world. And I feel like in that time of corona, our fellowship was born in this time of pain. And so many people have told me how meaningful it was for them. How important the fellowship was for them, especially during the height of the pandemic. And I feel like it was really just blessed, being from the mountains of King David that we were able to kind of spread that light. And now, the light is only growing and getting stronger.

And I just, I look at myself now and the last time I was in the United States was years ago. Well before corona, and I just see that I'm a changed person now. The way that I'm handling just speaking, toward the way I'm interacting with people. The way I'm even...just the simple things. The way I'm eating, the way I'm still waking up and exercising in the morning. I'm just a totally different person. And I can really only give the credit to this fellowship. It's as if the fellowship has somehow empowered me, has grown me, the support of the people around us has somehow like lifted me up personally. And what's amazing to hear is that we hear that the fellowship has lifted all these other people up also. And I don't even understand the physics of it because how could everyone lift everyone else up? It's like, it's not natural. Someone needs

to kind of like, you know, even when you do the red heifer, so the one who's been instituting the para adumah, so that person who instituted, that priest becomes unclean, and that person becomes clean. So that's usually the way of the world, you know. If you lift someone up over a fence, you're going to get pushed farther down. You're kind of lifting them up. But somehow, us coming together has lifted everyone else up together. We've all become better versions of who we are. We've all sort of like risen to the challenge of these times.

And I want to say something that's really important because I've been so disconnected from the media here. I'm a little bit more removed from what's happening in Israel. I'm definitely removed from what's happening in the United States. I'm just sort of living in here, in this place, with these people. And what has struck me so hard is that the media is constantly telling us how bad things are. There's riots in the street and people hate each other and there's these protests and there are these hates and I know that that's sort of a law of the media, that what bleeds, leads. That negative news always gets better ratings. It's easier to get click-throughs. But if that happens long enough, you start to believe that the world is really a dark, scary place.

And what I see here is that America, it's like, you know, Make America Great Again. You know, even though we love the Trump administration for moving the embassy to Jerusalem, and that was their slogan. I really don't agree with that slogan. America is really great already. The world is beautiful and the people that are around here, everyone it's like the world keeps on trying to divide us into these large chunks. There's right-wing people and left-wing people and Black Lives Matter and this movement and that movement. And what the fellowship has taught me is that there's no such thing. That's all so shallow. You can be a Catholic nun in Germany, you can be a Noachide in Arkansas, you can be an Ephraimite in South Carolina, you can be a Jew in Brooklyn, or a Jew in Judea, all of us are just seekers. All of us, just, we're individuals. And if we don't see each other as who we are on the inside, just souls, just little sparks of light that HaShem has sent into this world. I feel like that's where real healing happens. When we stop playing these different identity politics of color war that's going on. That we all associate with some group or one other group. But when we start just realizing that all of us are just sparks of the same fire, same source, a real fellowship can be born.

And I feel like I just met the most amazing people on this trip. It's been such a pleasure, just spending a few hours with them in the morning, the night after my talks. Letting them meet Tehila. Tehila of course you know is packing up and dealing with everything that needs to be dealt with right now. But every place I go I hear, Jeremy, you're really good...but Tehila, she's the best! So she's our secret weapon of this fellowship. Everyone loves Tehila. But the trip has been amazing, meeting the people has been amazing. Our fellowship has now officially transcended the virtual into the physical. And now, that's step one, and the second step is to bring it all the way to Israel, as soon as the borders open up. And I really believe that. It's just a matter of time until this corona thing blows over, that the regulations change. And imagine a fellowship that's not just from people in the United States, but people from Canada and Mexico

and Europe and Australia and all of us have an opportunity to make the pilgrimage together to our House of Prayer on the mountain and then to actually live in the place that we've built together. It's like a physical manifestation that will be an eternal monument in the Land of Israel of everything that we're working towards in the world.

And how, you know, fancy Jews from Palm Beach that just came to the mountain can enjoy it as much as someone that's just, you know, a simple farmer in Tennessee. And how awesome that all of us are working towards this together. You know, with all the opportunities in life. And the endless options of how to live. And really America represents that. You know, you can just be anything you want here. You can live any way you want here. And to choose a life in the service of God is just the highest form of living. By connecting ourselves and committing ourselves to the highest ideals, to the ultimate good, to Israel, to God, to spreading the light, and to find people that are committed to that same mission.

And I just learned from one of the fellows here, one of the members of our fellowship. He said, you know, Jeremy, when I committed to the fellowship, my life changed. And it was a definite, it was like, I could see how my life changed ever since I became a member. It's just when you make a commitment, so the whole world changes around you because that commitment has now shifted things. Things that otherwise might have bounced off you and gone some other way in some other direction. You actually mold a new direction with every commitment that you make. That's why emunah in Hebrew which means faith is rooted in the same word as na'aman, which means loyal. When you become loyal and committed to a higher ideal, your life changes for the good. Things that would have happened don't happen. And things that do happen that shouldn't have happened, just you change the trajectory with that commitment. And just seeing how this commitment of all of us has brought so much light all across the United States and hopefully very soon we'll be able to see it all across the world. It's just a blessing that's beyond measure. It's such a light. And so, thank you for hosting us there in Judea and holding down the fort. And hopefully very soon, we'll be back on the mountain. Bye Ari, shalom everyone.

Ari

Shalom Jeremy. Jeremy, can you hear? Thank you so much, Jeremy, it's so good to see your face. So good to hear from you. You know, you mentioned, Jeremy mentioned this group from Palm Beach that came out. You know they were supposed to come out at 11 A.M., and then they pushed it off and pushed it off, the tour guide, it wasn't their fault. They came at 2 o'clock, so close to the fellowship. I had to run, it was crazy, but it was so invigorating. It was so exciting. I can't even tell you of the degree because you know, so few people are allowed in the country right now. Somehow, they got in, not as individuals, but as a group. And I'm telling you they were in tears. These people, they were holy, but they were professionals. You know, they're like Jewish lawyers and doctors and whatever. They're grown-ups, you know.

But I think I may have forgotten the spiritual power that simply radiates out of our mountain. It was just so incredible, so exciting, I cannot wait for all of you to experience it. Anyways, Jeremy, thank you for sharing that. It was very powerful. It spoke to my heart. You know, you give credit to the fellowship for helping you out. And I do too. Believe me, I do. I went through a crazy time and I just put it all on the table and shared with the fellowship and they were really, really there for me. But you also were really there for me. You set a very good example for me, Jeremy, during that very challenging period for you. And I learned from that example. And I think that's what we do. We hold each other up. You'd be really proud of me, Jeremy. I have been running! Running! I ran to Ibei H'Nachal and back, around the loop, three times. That's a big deal. That's a big deal. Anyways, that's your example.

So you know, each of us thinks that we're getting the better deal. The fellowship thanks us all the time. We're thanking them all the time. We owe them our lives, they owe us...they just...we all feel like we're so indebted to each other and that's really part of the beauty. And that it's really about relationships. Ok, so if you think I've gotten personal up until now, now we're going to get really personal. Because today in our fellowship, I want to talk to you about a really personal thing and it's called ice cream. I want to talk about ice cream. Who here is an ice cream fan? Raise your hands if you're an ice cream fan. Jeremy, raise your hand, I know you like ice cream.

Anyways, here's the deal. I'm more of a chicken wings guy and that's fine. But my wife, you know, you heard about this Ben and Jerry's boycott, right? The Judea and Samaria boycott. It's really taken Israel by storm. Much of the world is talking about it and watching to see how it unfolds. And for us, the Abramowitz family, well it has struck particularly close to home because my wife, Shaena, is a real ice cream fan. I mean she loves it, it's her thing. Particularly Ben and Jerry's, that's her favorite. They're the other two men in her life. And sometimes I feel like I just can't compete with them. But at least now that the ice cream is being boycotted, I know that when she calls for her chubby hubby, she's talking about me. So that's the upside. That's a good thing.

But for those of you who don't know what's going on, let me just give you a little thing. For a few years now, Ben and Jerry's has been increasingly aligning themselves with anti-Israel activists like Linda Sarsour, who's just an out of the closet, open Jew-hating congresswoman from America after whom they actually named a flavor! She got a flavor named after them. There's no Jeremy Gimpel, there's no Pat and Rich, there's no Cal and Ardelle, but there's a Linda Sarsour? Come on, it's ridiculous! And what do they name the flavor? Resist. Resist what? I don't even know. But I'll tell you that's one flavor we've been able to resist is Resist.

So anyways, they've continued down this road and it culminated in this boycott of Judea and Samaria this week. And now it's actually a little bit more complicated of an issue regarding whether we in Israel should boycott Ben and Jerry's here. Because it turns out the Israeli

company that manufactures and distributes Ben and Jerry's, run by a proud Jew named Avi Zinger, could have just accepted the boycott and agreed to stop distributing in Judea and Samaria and gone on with business and pointed up and said it's not my fault, but because I mean, I don't know if you know this, but Judea and Samaria only account for two percent of sales in Israel of Ben and Jerry's. Which shocked me because my wife and I live in Judea. Us alone probably covered that. But either way, he refused on principle and therefore Ben and Jerry and their parent company, Unilever announced that they will not renew their contract with them when it comes up for renewal next year. So many people are pointing out that we in Israel should go out of our way to purchase Ben and Jerry's to support this Zinger distributor guy until the contract expires, which is an initiative by the way that my wife, shockingly has decided to fully support. After all, she explained it to me, it's her Zionist duty. We need to go out and buy Ben and Jerry's.

Now as infuriating and hypocritical and unjust as this is, as always, Jews react with humor and by now I'm pretty sure it's one of our survival mechanisms. So here are just a couple of the funny spins that I wanted to share with you and the truth is that they aren't even the funniest, but it's a good sampling, so here are some of the new, suggested flavors.



Anyways, it's cute, it's cute and a lot of people are submitting all sorts of short video submissions knocking Ben and Jerry's. Here's a cute one I wanted to share. It's really not the best, but I wanted to share it.

(video)



Ben & Jerry's just announced that it would stop selling ice cream in Israel's Biblical heartland, Judea and Samaria.

This boycott is a direct anti-Semitic attack against the children of Israel being raised in their ancestral homeland.

Alright, Jeremy, you're furrowing your brow. I don't know, maybe you're in the sun or maybe you don't get it, but the point is, the kid took out the Ben and Jerry's to stand on, to get the Israeli stuff. And so, now you get it, right? Anyways, this is dangerous, that's the truth and everybody feels it. People's eyes are on what's playing out here and depending on how it goes, many other companies could follow suit, despite its absolute ridiculousness. Things like this pick up momentum and take on a life of their own. We see it happening all the time, particularly in America. As a matter of fact, friends of ours in the Shurat HaDin Law Center have announced that they are starting an ice cream company and naming it, now this is for real.



Judea and Samaria Ben and Jerry's, in which their flagship flavor will be Frozen, Chosen, People. Now that's a real thing, it's not a joke, they're not making a joke out of it. Why? So it sounds weird, but actually it's quite brilliant, now her name, the girl that runs it is Nitsana Darshan-Leitner. And she explained that she's doing this to force Ben and Jerry's and Unilever to defend their trademark. They're going to have to go to court, and she's forcing a legal battle in which she will then force them to explain in her own words "why they do business in other occupied territories and don't want to do business in Israel".

So she used South Sudan and Crimea as examples of those other occupied territories that Ben and Jerry are selling in. But the reason I'm not such a fan of that explanation is because those really are occupied territories. Whereas Judea and Samaria are not. They're not. Unless you mean of course that we are occupied by the God of Israel. In that case, we definitely are occupied. How do you like that, Jeremy? Occupied by HaShem. I just thought of that last night. Occupied by HaShem. I don't know, but that little mini revelation brought me some serious joy. So I wanted to share it and from the faces out there, I'm getting some smiles, so I'll take it.

But anyway, I mean, as far as the conventional definition of occupation, Judea and Samaria are the least occupied territories in the world considering that the actual ancient indigenous people of this Land, the Jews, are still living here. It's really remarkable. But I'm sure that she said that

because she means that even by their own definition and by their own accusations, even according to that, they're still hypocrites. That's the point she was making. Anyways, I believe the most interesting part of all this, the most noteworthy, the part I want to discuss with you, the reason I really brought this up, is that Ben and Jerry are of course, say it with me, what are? They're Jews. Ben and Jerry are Jews. That's right. Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield. It's as Jewish as it gets, and why do I say that? Why do I say of course? Because this is nothing new. Often the loudest and most vociferous Israel bashers and Jew-haters are actually Jews themselves. Today, there's, I don't know if you know these names and I bless you, you should never have to know them. There's Peter Beinart, and Jeremy Ben Ami, and Noam Chomsky and these are just a few examples. And going back, we've had these self-hating Jews in every generation.

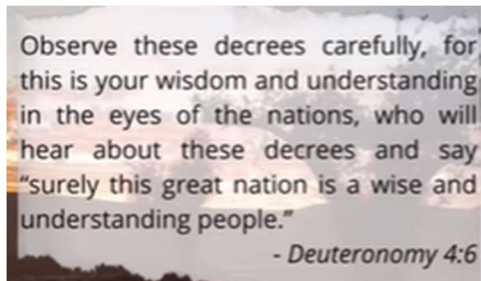
Just a couple fellowships ago, we talked about Max Naumann. You remember this guy who founded and led the Association of German National Jews? Yeah, that's a group of Jews that supported Hitler himself, even when it was already clear what he was doing, these Jews came and supported Hitler himself because it was for the greater good of the fatherland, or whatever. Anyways, without getting too deep in the psychology, which can be understood by analyzing 2,000 years of irrational Jew hatred that transcends any specific reason, I believe the most simple explanation for the deep emotional psychological pathology of these Jews like Ben and Jerry to turn against their brethren and identify with those who hate them is that they believe that if they turn against their fellow Jews, then these Woke progressives or communists or socialists or whoever, they are trying to curry favor with at the moment, that they will welcome them, that they'll accept them, and they'll even love them as the good Jews. And that they will be spared whatever dark fate may await the rest of the Jewish people.

But this never works. It always, always comes back to bite them and most often they inadvertently forward and amplify the hate from which they're so afraid. I mean, look, they're leading this boycott. There could be tremendous waves of hate against Israel and Jews that come back to them, that they're amplifying. It's always that way, whatever you resist, persists. They should make a flavor called that.

But anyways, I really believe that this is a sickness. And that Ben and Jerry should not be hated for it, but we should have compassion on them for being so spiritually ill and disconnected from their identity. From being disconnected from themselves. That they could do such a despicable thing. Because if they saw clearly, even for a moment, they would weep. And they would beg both HaShem and their people for forgiveness for perpetrating these lies and persecutions against them.

Now, if Ben and Jerry, or even one of the other of them read this week's Torah portion, they would have known that this is not the way to cause the nations to respect you or love you. As a matter of fact, their actions only cause those to whom they are seeking to ingratiate

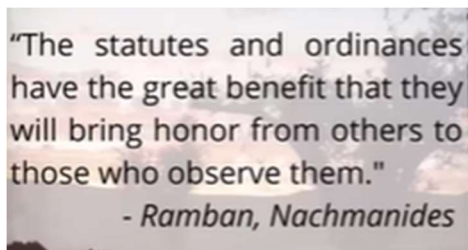
themselves, to resent them and to disrespect them even more. It's like intuitively obviously true. Who would respect people like that that turn against their own? Particularly when it's one thing to be a whistleblower, it's another thing just to be filled with lies and deception. That's what they're doing. If they only opened up to this week's Torah portion, they would read in one of the first verses. This is Deuteronomy, Chapter 4, verse 6:



What is Hashem telling us here? Something that is so counterintuitive to the mind of Jews like Ben and Jerry. That it's not assimilation and self-hate that will cause the nations to love us. But exactly the reverse. By embracing our Jewish identity, studying our Torah, understanding, loving, and living by the mitzvot, the commandments, not seeking to blend in, but on the

contrary, being willing and proud to stand out. To be different. To take off the baseball hats and put on our kippas, to wear our tzitzit, right? The fringes on our garments, to wear them out, not tuck them in, but wear them out so that everyone in the world can see them. But most importantly, so that we can see them. So we can gaze upon them and remember that we are surrounded by and entrusted with a divine and holy mission by God, Himself. And that mission does not include Friday night cocktail parties with Woke progressives.

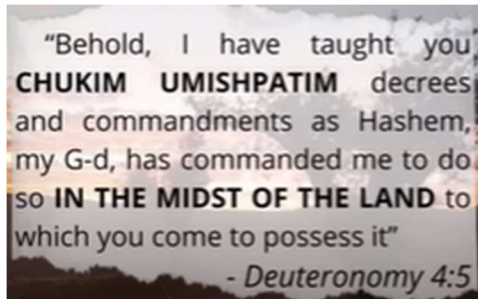
And to sharpen this point even further, the Ramban, Nachmanides says:



I even see this here in Israel. Having lived surrounded by Arab villages for years now, and having worked alongside them nearly every day, we have had some interesting conversations, open conversations. And the truth is, that the verse in the Torah that I just quoted, it applies here as well in an even stronger way.

Because in the exile, this honor is limited. Judaism there is much more of a religion than it is here in the Land where the mitzvot, the commandments are starting to be applied on a national and societal level, which was the whole purpose to begin with. After all, the Torah tells us, as do the sages from Rashi to Ramban, and others, that the Torah was given to us in order to be lived in the Land of Israel. And the reason that we even keep the commandments in the exile is so that we remember how to keep them when we return to the Land of Israel. Please remind me, I need to share with you, Jeremy shared with me a metaphor, an allegory, I think he made it up about a piano player. I'm going to try to get it and share it with you next time. It's just so beautiful.

But our portion, the Torah portion tells us this, Deuteronomy chapter four, verse five:



So when I speak to my Arab friends and this isn't a singular conversation, but it's thematically repeated itself many times over, they tell me that those who they really resent are the secularized, leftist Jews in Tel Aviv. Which a lot of people just wouldn't think that because these Jews are always acting like they're standing up for the Arabs and you'd think that they would love them. And of course, keep in mind that this by no means describes all the Jews of Tel Aviv by any means. Of course not. But the type they are describing, well, most of them are in Tel Aviv. Anyways, they see them as these Westernized European colonialists, importing ideas and values to the region which are foreign and unwelcome to this region. And if I were to be honest, when seeing things through their eyes, I can understand why they would see it that way and I could actually empathize.

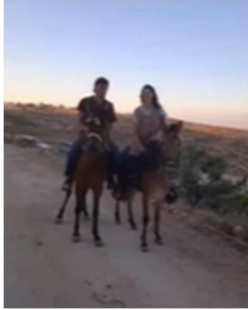
But anyways, as we live amongst each other, and we work together and not only get to know each other, but we actually observe each other. You know we're around each other all the time, we witness each other and it causes us to see each other differently. And now I see them differently. I've been inspired by them in many ways which I never imagined before. Just their work ethic, how hard they work, many of them. It's inspiring. Anyways, many of these Arabs have told me that when they see us fervently praying to God and working the Land and wearing our ancient traditional Jewish garb and willing to fight and sacrifice for the Land. When they see us animatedly immersed in studying Torah, then they say that indeed these are "al alkitab." These are the people of the book. These are the children of Abraham. And I'm not saying that this shift happens overnight, and I'm not saying that they will immediately love us. But there's no question that they respect us and that they honor us, even if they don't yet see how we are a blessing to the Land and how we're a blessing to them, even though more and more are seeing it.

And the story that stands out the most prominently in my mind, I believe I may have told you this in the past, so I won't go into depth here. But it's when our farm was being raided by this group of Israeli leftists called Shalom Achshav, ironically, Peace Now. And they're funded by these foreign government, foreign governments, particularly from Europe who seek to subvert and sabotage the Jewish return to Judea. So they fund these non-profits to destroy us from within. Because they would never get that sort of funding and power if it wasn't for these foreign governments. Anyways, they came onto the farm and I was in the olive groves, and they all had their cameras in my face, and I went up to the head woman and I tried to be a mensch. I tried to just be a good guy even though I knew who they were and I knew what it was about. And I said, Shalom, what's your name? And she said this with such hatred, it's like, what is your name? So, I said, my name is Ari. Did you come to visit? She says, no, you are here to visit. You understand what she's saying? That we're not living there. We're just there to visit. And I didn't know what to respond, so I said, we're all just visiting here in this world. I

didn't know what to respond. But on the way back, I'm going back and of course I'm feeling all of this like hatred and anger. We've put all that we have, everything that we have into this farm and now they just want to destroy it. Just for the purpose of destroying it. And that's their whole mission. And I was feeling hatred and anger and then we've talked about it before. One of my most important principles is that whenever I feel these negative emotions, hatred and anger, I always try to replace them with compassion. And it almost always works. I think it always works. And it wasn't hard to work here, to see these leftist Jews and understand and be compassionate to them. That they're just missing out on the life and vitality of Judea and what it is to be a Jew.

Anyways, the reason I'm telling you this story is because about 15 minutes later I get back to my house and who arrives at my house is these imams. These Muslim, Arab, Bedouin, spiritual leaders. They show up at my house, they walk right in and thank goodness Yossi was there who speaks fluent Arabic and they said, I said, what are you doing here? They said in Arabic, they said to us, we heard what happened, we heard that these people came against you. Don't let them dishearten you. Don't listen to them. This is your Land and since you've been here, you've been a tremendous blessing to us. You've respectfully employed our people and you treat us honorably and our trees are growing better than they were before you got here. Meaning they believed like even like the deep mystical blessing that we've been bringing. And it was just such a crazy day, a day that I'll never forget because these leftist Jews that are trying to endear themselves to Arabs are really alienating the Arabs even further while we're actually building real friendships and relationships based on our fear of God and living holistically as Jews in the Land of Israel.

All right, it's a crazy story, right? That's just a crazy story. I told this to the Palm Beach group today and they're like, you need to write that in a book. Fortunately, I got a lot of it actually on tape. I couldn't really video it because I thought it would take us out of the moment to like put a camera up to their face. But anyways, a lot, so many other things are going on. Yossi's daughter, my partner Yossi's daughter recently got engaged, which is a great joy at the farm. He was starting to get really nervous. Really nervous, she's 20 years old! Gotta be nervous there. She's his oldest and his first and he was just ecstatic. And he loved her fiancé. This is a picture of her and her fiancé. Can you see them there on their horses? On the farm? It's like indigenous Judeans.



And that night, there was a celebration at the farm and here's what it looked like (video):



I'll tell you, I'll guarantee you, I don't know if that came out well, I didn't pull out my camera that many times, but there's no engagement party anywhere in the world where Jews look anything like that. And this is how they look every day. They don't know anything else. It's the most natural thing in the world for these young Jews

growing up in Judea to return to their deepest roots of what it is to be a Jew, what it means to serve HaShem in the most natural and integrated and holistic way.

I remember walking around there, and just seeing. I felt like I was at the party, I don't know if you remember this from the Tanach, but there was a party in which Abshalom, killed his brother Amnon for what he did to their sister Tamar and took him to the back and I just felt like in the back of this party something like that was happening. It just felt like it was such a throwback from the times of the Tanach, and it just happens all the time there. I can't wait for you to see it. When this group from Palm Beach came, they were the most captivated by these little Judean children because they're of course comparing these Jewish kids to their kids in America who are you know, on their palm pilots or you know their smartphones and televisions and these kids are just, you know, wild indigenous, it's hard to explain.

But anyway, another little example, just a day in the life of the farm, you know, sometimes I pull out my phone to take a picture or video and everybody looks at me like I'm strange for doing it because to them, there's nothing to see here. This is just how things are. I'm from America, I'm from Texas. I see the unbelievable redemptive quality. But to them, it's just the way things are. So this is just the average morning out here on our farm in Judea.



The young boys and girls, they take turns, sometimes they take out the sheep, sometimes they we take them out, but usually they do and this is what the mornings look like. (video)

So, you know, I feel like I'm in the CIA sometimes when I take these videos. I just have to hold it tighter, hold it to me, you know, that they don't like take kindly to being videoed. What's it all about? You know, smartphones, they just don't have them, they don't want them. They're in the fields, praying to God with instruments, not just mumbling words.

You know, it's not just that we're returning to the Land. The Land is returning to us. And the Divine Presence dwells amongst us. And then they return from the shepherding and they milk the goats and make the cheeses. And I cannot wait till you are able to come and taste these cheeses. I pulled them out for these Jews from Palm Beach and they were just enamored with them. You don't taste you know, cheese like that in Fareway or Randalls or Kroeger, or whatever the stores are. They're making them while they're learning how to make them. I remember that they brought us these cheeses for us to taste and I was ready to give an encouraging and empowering compliment, and it was absolutely, unbelievably delicious. Most of these cheeses, I mean, they're just the most delicious things I've ever had. I'm telling you the truth. I would weigh a full two kilograms less if it wasn't for these Judean girls and their cheese making.

And this Judean life, it's just so all encompassing. And of course it is. In the diaspora, Jews go to the synagogue and that's pretty much where they do the Jewish thing. But here in the Land, it's the language and it's the culture and it's the calendar and it's time, it's time itself. Just yesterday was a joyous day on the Jewish calendar. You know, after the whole difficult and painful three weeks, which culminated in the Nine Days, which culminated in Tisha B'Av, when the Temple was destroyed, this Sabbath was called the Sabbath of Consolation, of Comfort. And Friday, was what's called Tu B'Av, the 15th of Av. I think this is a festival which you know, a lot of Jews haven't heard of and probably most Christians haven't. And I was very reluctant to even talk about it. But if I had to make the comparison, which I was nervous to do, if I had to draw a parallel, it would be to Valentine's Day. I hope it wasn't heretical for me to draw that parallel. But because Tu B'av, it's a day of love. You know the 15th of every month is the full moon of the month. So Tu B'av, the 15th of the month of Av...Av is a tragic month. And the full moons of course represent hope and from the deepest darkness, comes the most beautiful light. So it's a festival of future redemption which we all recognize that we don't fully understand right now as we just aren't there. We're just not there yet.

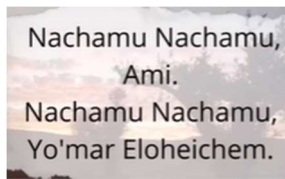
But on Tu B'Av, our sages say the daughters of Jerusalem would go and dance in the vineyards and quote, whoever did not have a wife, would go there into the vineyards to find himself a bride. The first time of which, think about it, where would that be? The tribe of Benjamin, who was forbidden to marry within Israel due to their horrific behavior in the episode of the concubine in Givah. Remember that story? It's in the 19th chapter of the book of Shoftim, Judges. And the other tribes, they vowed not to give them their daughters in marriage. And when they realized that a tribe of Israel was on the verge of being wiped out, the sages determined that the girls would go dance in the field. And the men of Benjamin would go and grab them from the fields, not asking for their father's permission, thereby saving a tribe of Israel from extinction and saving their fathers from violating their vows. And that too, that happened on the 15th of Av.

And I was going to go into all the things, but there were so many things that happened on the 15th of Av. We have a long history. But the reason I wanted to share those with you, is because this Tu B'av, on Friday, this past Friday on our mountain in Judea, I had a friend of mine, Mattanya Harrow, who is the son of one of the superstars of our media network, The Land of Israel Network, her name is Eve Harrow, just talk about an incredible woman, anyways, he called me and said that he wanted to ask his girlfriend to marry him on this special day. He said to me that she's the most beautiful girl in the world and our farm is the most beautiful place in the Land, so he had to do it by us. And here are just a few of the pictures.



It was just so beautiful and they were so cute and they were so in love and to know that the seeds of another holy family were being planted at our farm in Judea meant so much because we have honestly a lot of challenges. A lot of challenges and it's things like that which make all the blood, sweat, and tears worth it. And these beautiful spiritual transformations happen every

single day out on the Arugot Farm. And I believe that this is how the prophets envisioned things unfolding. Because the Haftarah, you remember what the Haftarah is, the portion of the prophets that we read alongside the Torah portion? So this week is a very powerful one. And this is part of the reason that we call this Shabbat – Shabbat Nachamu. The Shabbat of Comfort, because the reading starts with Isaiah 40:4:



Comfort my people, comfort them says your God. I thought maybe we would try to sing these words. I thought we would try to sing those words together, to pray those words together. And again, I don't know how it will work out, but its worth trying. As long as we sing the words with our whole hearts and mean every word and I thought these words in specific, we should sing together as this fellowship. As each and every one of you, I believe, are a big part of the fulfillment of this verse. You are a comfort to us and to the Jewish people. And when we tell our Jewish friends in Judea about you, it's hard for them to even believe. That's why I can't wait for you to meet each other in person.

Ok, so here are the words they're up on the screen. And we'll sing them together and I'm going to tell you how it goes. And we already know, I've given the disclaimer before that I should not be the one doing this. Because the angelic voice was not among the cards that I was dealt. But we're family here and so we can hear each other's hearts and not just our voices. Ok, so here it goes. I'm going to sing it to you a couple times and then you could join me. We could sing together, we could try to give it a shot. Ok, so the words go like this....

Ari sings nachamu

It's so much more beautiful than it sounds like when I'm reading right now, but anyways,(Ari sings again)

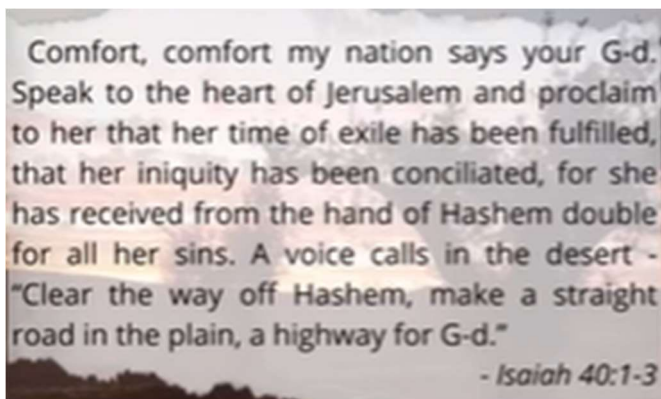
Ok, do we got that? Could we try to sing that together? Tabitha? Are we ready? We're going to turn on the microphones and it's going to say, do you want to be unmuted and you can if you want to join. I'm going to start singing it. I'm going to do one round on my own and then the next round, you can join me. Ok, so try to keep the talking down in the background. Ok, so I'm going to sing the first round and in the second round you can join me.



Join me.

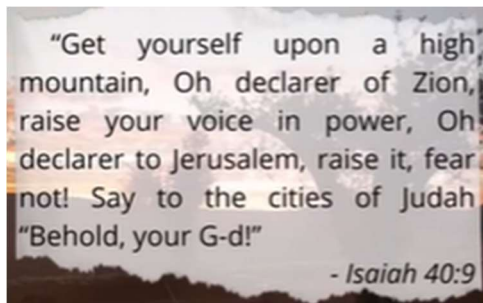
Ok, I don't care how that sounded to the human ear. I really believe in HaShem's, it was beautiful. It was a little bit like the row, row your boat thing where we like all start at different spots. But I'll tell you that maybe next time when we do that, we should have the words with that little dot that jumps from the words on top of each other and that way we can know which word we're on and we could sing it together. Because I'm not giving up on that. I want us to be able to really sing together to pray together, to join each other in a real way before we're able to do so in person.

Ok, so what do those words mean? Ok, Isaiah 40:1-3. This is from the Haftarah of this week:



And I believe that desert from which that voice calls out is the Judean desert. I believe that our mountain is a part of it.

For let's go on to the verse 9 because this is where it happens. Until this Shabbat, I never read it this way before. And it was right before my eyes. I've read that many times. Then my partner Yossi point it out. Here's verse 9:



Is that just so beautiful? I never read it that way. Yossi read it to me. It's here, in the mountains of Judea, the words in Hebrew there's actually a city called Mevasaret Zion in the mountains of Judea overlooking the hills of Jerusalem. It's here in which redemption will begin to unfold. And it's from here that redemption will be declared. And I believe that what's unfolding on our mountain, that what's unfolding in our fellowship, is a

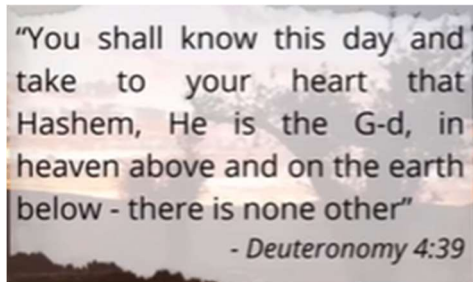
fundamental part of the unfolding of redemption. After all, it was in Judea, in Hebron, in which King David first ruled for the first seven years of his kingdom. And then he moved his kingdom to Jerusalem. What starts in Judea, we've shared this before, what starts in Judea, ends in Jerusalem.

Ok, now this week's Torah portion, it's so rich, it really contained within it, I was so conflicted, because when I started writing the verses that I wanted to share, I was just transcribing the entire Torah portion. Because it really contains with it the deepest truths, the most transcendent secrets, and when I read it, it almost felt like it was the entire Torah condensed within one portion. And I personally believe that within it is an insight into what redemption really means. Because this past Shabbat, we had a very dear beloved friend come out to the farm and his family was staying in Jeremy's home while the Gimpels were traveling around America sharing the beauty of Judea. So on the way back from prayers in Ibea N'chal, in a nearby village, I asked him a question that I ask a lot of my friends and my teachers. It's just on my mind all the time. And I say, what do you think redemption really is? What is redemption really? And after a moment, he said to me, right here. At the farm. This farm feels like redemption. And I understood what he was saying. I did. Believe me, I did. You just feel it. You feel it at the farm and on a certain level, I agree with him fully.

But the more I thought about it on the deeper level, I don't believe redemption is out anywhere. I think it's in here. And what I mean by that is that right here in this Torah portion, because this week's Torah portion contains what I consider to be the central foundational verses of the Torah. And one of them has become my own personal mantra that I chant to myself often many, many times a day when things are rough. Because you see this is a confusing world. One moment we can feel God, see God, know God, and the next moment we're lost. And I find that when we're lost, if we're not prepared for it, if we don't have our compass out, it can be difficult to find our way back, to find God again. To act with clarity and faith because everything is just so confusing.

And there are three words within that verse which has become my personal anchor, my own personal $e = mc^2$, which always helps me regain my footing and it centers me. It's the verse I say when I'm angry, when I'm afraid, they're words that have helped me significantly during the last challenging three weeks that I have shared with you all too transparently. And

what are these three words? The ones that speak to me the most? The ones that save me? Many of you have been with us on this fellowship from the beginning and you could probably say it with me. Ain od milvado (אין עֹד מִלְבָּדוֹ). There is nothing other than Him. I look around and these things which haunt me, I remember HaShem is within them as well. There's nothing but HaShem. There is nothing but HaShem. Here's the verse in its entirety.



While it's three words, those three words immediately infuse me with an entire set of logical deductions and understandings, they immediately remind me that everything and everyone, all that's happening to me, HaShem is behind it all. So therefore, it's all good. It's all good, it's all perfect.

And what is my definition of good? Closeness to God, a relationship with God, not that which is easy and comfortable, but that which will bring us closest to God. So, if there's a challenge that's happening to me, that means that hidden within that challenge, if I'm blessed with the eyes to see it, is the greatest opportunity for connection with God. That for reasons beyond my knowledge, this challenge is exactly what I need right now. And just four verses later, the Torah goes even deeper. And shares with us our job description in this world. There's not a slide for it, but I'll tell you.

Know this day and internalize it into your heart, that HaShem is our God in the heavens above and on the earth below. There is nothing else. There is none else, there is nothing else. Ain ode, there's nothing else.

What is our job description then? To internalize this truth into our hearts. We've talked about it before many times, but if this is the reason we're here in the world, or at least one of them, it's worth reviewing it again and again. Review it, review it. This is why we say the Shema. Here O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord our God is one. That's why we say it morning and night. That's why we repeat these things, to review it and review it and bring it into our hearts.

Because Rambam Maimonides, we've quoted before, he says the greatest distance in the world is the distance in the world is the distance between our head and our hearts. Now this task is the greatest and the most magnificent and most formidable task in the world. And it's possibly one of the greatest reasons that the entire world was created. This is one of our greatest purposes of our lives and the job description of the Jewish people in the world, as Isaiah said, to be a living testimony of God to the world. To integrate this into our hearts on a national level.

The Ten Commandments, I know we're running out of time, they're in this week's Torah portion. Each one of them is a manifestation of this truth in a different way. Delving into each one would go beyond the time frame that we have left. Because I'm already over time. But this truth, it testifies for itself. Just sit down and read them again with this idea in your mind and in your heart. And I really think you'll see it. An extreme oversimplification here – the Sabbath. We stop working. We stop creating. We stop earning a living, we stop earning a living? What then? Who will provide for us if we don't earn a living? The answer is, HaShem. He provides. Ain od milvado. There's nothing other than him. Brandon shared with me an incredible story that happened to him that testified about this truth. Brandon did. Anyway, don't steal. Of course not. HaShem is behind everything. He gives us what we need and what is ours. And if He didn't give it to us honestly, according to Halacha, according to the Law of the Torah, it means that we're not supposed to have it. It will not be a blessing to us, it will be a curse to us.

Don't covet your neighbor's wife. How could God tell us how to feel? So, of course we can't covet our neighbor's wife because she's our neighbor's wife, and not ours. Because she was created perfectly for our neighbor, designed for him in the way that he needed to grow and believing anything otherwise is just making ourselves into a god. It's almost like idolatry. And the commandments that we struggle the most in, well those are the most precious. Because it's withing that struggle that our holiest and most sacred service takes place. Because the very resistance itself is a testimony to the fact of our own personal idolatry that lies within that very thing.

So, HaShem goes on to give us the reason for all of this. That we may learn to fear Him. Yirabi. That's the word that's used that we should learn yirabi, to fear God. But fear is not a good translation of the word yir'a (יִרְאָה). Yir'a comes from the word ro'eh, which means to see. To see is a much better definition because that my friends is what redemption is. Redemption is when we are given the eyes to see. Redemption is when the truth that our eyes see enters deep withing our hearts where we don't merely believe it intellectually, but we know it. We experience it. We know it in our hearts and we feel it in our bones. When the knowledge of God is so clear and only God can do this. When it's so clear that it covers the earth like water covers the sea. God's presence is so tangible, so irrefutable that it will radically change the behavior of all of mankind. They're not going to learn warfare anymore. Can you imagine something more distant from the world we live in today with so much bloodshed?

And that my friends, is the work that we're doing here every week in this fellowship. Because this is when it matters. Not after the times of redemption when God just gives it to us. Now, in the thick of things. This is when it matters. It's a holy work and it's a sacred work. And I believe that it's precious and it's dear in HaShem's eyes. And I believe with all of my heart that

the love and the humility and the brotherhood in this fellowship is helping even if it's a small way, I just know it. It's helping to hasten the coming of Messiah.

All right, so friends the truth is that there's a lot that I wanted to share with you and discuss with you. But we have to wind it down now, but please stay connected. Don't be shy. Reach out and share your thoughts. Share your hearts. Share your questions. That's what it's all about. And share your prayer requests, please. Often, you know what was happening before? As you were sending in prayer requests and I was writing them on a list on a sheet of paper and I would lose it and then I would go and try to find it. Now, I receive it and I just pray right then. Right then, on the spot. Someone asked me to bless her sister and I was able to make a little video and send it to her. It's just my greatest joy, that's what we're supposed to be doing. That's our mission is to pray for each other and to bless each other and to bless you. So, I pray right then. So please, keep sending them in.

So now, before I bless you with the Aaronic blessing, I want to allow someone else to bless you first. Because right after our last fellowship, after I finished pouring out my heart to all of you, a sweet and holy little girl from the fellowship, I won't say her name, but her mother sent me a recording of a blessing that she recorded just for me. And if you remember the state that I was in after last fellowship, it was very different than where I'm at right now. It was a little bit of a vulnerable and painful spot. And it just touched me so deeply, my eyes just filled with tears. It was just like hearing an angel of God blessing me with that very same blessing which I'm so privileged and honored to be able to share with all of you. So please open your hearts to be blessed by this sweet, holy little angel:



(Singing of the Aaronic blessing in Hebrew.)

How beautiful is that? How beautiful is that?
You're all angels to me and to us. And you know,
there's not a lot of veil or obfuscation over that.
She's just this little angel that just touched me so
deeply just as it did right now.

So now, before I bless you and I can't hold a candle to her, I'm going to ask you to stick around because right afterwards, we're going to play a very special recording of the prayer and the teaching of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. We may have maybe last year played this in a different environment, a different context, but he shared it years ago, decades ago on this very Shabbat, Shabbat Nachamu. And it feels even truer today than it was when he first shared it from his soul. So allow me to bless you with the blessing of Aaron the priest. Because again, although I'm not a descendant of Aaron, the Torah tells us that we the Jewish people are an am Cohanim, we're a nation of priests. So it's just my privilege to bless all of you.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

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

I love you, my friends, stay connected. Stay in touch. Love and blessings from Jerusalem from Judea from Israel.



Nachamu Nachamu – Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dptj7zzlig>