

Session 240  
Shoftim – Preparing for the Most Important Year of our Lives  
31 August 2025

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADnJ\\_tyoarI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADnJ_tyoarI)

Jeremy

Shalom everybody, welcome to the Land of Israel Fellowship. It is so good to see all of your beautiful faces. It's just such a special time of the year. Welcome to the Land of Israel Fellowship, welcome to our global family, welcome to our global movement. A new day is coming, a new Jerusalem is coming, and we're all going to welcome it together. It's always like marmalade on my neshamah. It's just so good to be together, it's so good to gather here...just looking at the chats, from Germany, the United Kingdom, and all across the United States, and Asia, it's just unbelievable that every week we keep on gathering and we keep on growing and we keep on sending out these lights and gathering the sparks. It's just incredible.

And summer in Israel is officially over. And it's a new cycle, a new life cycle. And I always find it beautiful, the new cycle of life, school starts, yeshivas start, everything starts at the end of last year. It's like ELUL, ELUL is the last month of the year, but it's really the beginning of the new year when everything starts anew. And it's a time of return, a time of reflection, of preparation. It's preparing for the Days of Awe that are ahead, preparing for the new year. And to accomplish all of that properly, we have to enter into the new year right. We have to end the year right and launch us into the new year ahead.

And I just love our Fellowship so much because we experience everything together, the ups, the downs, the wars, the prayers, the salvation, the tragedies, the victories. It's like we experience the unique times, the seasons together. And embedded in our calendar, we're just journeying through life together as one extended family that stretches across the world. And there's nothing that I'm doing in the world that's more beautiful than that.

And so, I first want to make two announcements. The first is that Tehila Gimpel is going to be joining us, and not only that, we're going to be hosting a Fellowship Connection together at the end of this Fellowship. I got so much positive feedback from the last Fellowship Connection. People liked talking, people like listening to live interactions. I just feel like we needed those connections more often. So today, Tehila and I will open up the Stream to live interactions and that's going to be a lot of fun.

The second announcement is that in two weeks, we're going to host a live, open Fellowship session in honor of the month of ELUL, preparing for Rosh Hashanah. The last live Fellowship

session that we had that was open to the public on different platforms, I think we had 600 people participating live, we gave people a chance to taste what the Fellowship is and the wonderous reality of our global community. And so many new members joined, and it was awesome that we had a chance to kind of give over a taste of what our Fellowship is to so many people. And every month or so, we're going to try to open up these live sessions and kind of let our Fellowship spread its wings and spread it's light to the ends of the earth. And so, mark that in your calendar because that's going to be huge. Two weeks from today, it's going to make waves around the world, and that is exactly what we need to be doing.

But just to give you a feeling of what it's like in Israel right now. What's the energy like in the Land? Because outside of Israel, it's a totally different experience. It's like... I don't even know, it's like...well, are they preparing for Thanksgiving or I don't even know. Right now, it's ELUL and ELUL is in the air. And now, there was a gathering last week at the Kotel. A special prayer for the month of ELUL, for the coming new year, and a coming together in prayer for the hostages. And I just never seen anything like it. Check this out.



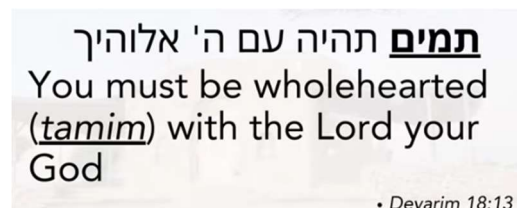
I mean, there's something new happening in Israel. That was a gathering that like spilled outside of the Kotel, into the parking lot, into the road, outside the Old City. There's something new that's happening. I've just never seen a gathering like that before. And I always imagine in my mind's eye the Temple, standing, and tens of thousands of Jews just meters away from the Temple praying their little hearts out. So the war in Israel, I mean, it's brought us closer together than ever before. It's brought us together in ways that we've never experienced before. And it's just a matter of time until the war come to an end, but Israel will be forever changed. And when the dust settles, I believe the world will behold a nation like no other nation on earth. A nation that will literally serve as an example for the world to see and the world to model themselves after.

And so, joining all of Israel this time of year, I just want to start this Fellowship with a prayer from all of us, from all over the world that come together in the Land of Israel, and bring the unity that the world so needs right now. And there is no unity better and greater than a unity in prayer. That's why the Temple is called a House of Prayer for all nations. And so, in our small way, let's bring our House of Prayer of all Nations together.

HaShem, Master of the Universe, it's ELUL and we've come together, Your Fellowship to draw closer to You. We're standing at the doorway to the new year, and together we ask for Your

guidance and for Your light in our lives. Help us return to You, help us return to ourselves, teach us to trust You with simplicity, with temimut, to accept what comes upon us with love and in doing so, be truly with You, Your portion, Your people. Awaken within us the prophetic spark, accept what comes upon us with love and in doing so, to be truly with You. Let us hear the still small voice, the voice of our soul that whispers Your guidance. Help us quiet the noise of the world, so that in moments of choice we can hear Your call and live with integrity. Bless us, HaShem, with sincerity, courage, and faith. May our return this ELUL be a return to wholeness, to truth, and to You. Bless everyone here in this Fellowship, bless them and bless their families, guide us all on the path to a new Jerusalem, to a new world, and help us play our part in bringing redemption to the world. Amen.

All right, my friends, this week's Torah portion, Shoftim is always read to kick off the month of ELUL. It's always the first Shabbat of ELUL. It launches us into the month. And it's incredible because there's like the heart of this parsha speaks exactly, miraculously to the time that we're living in. And it has directives that we need to give us the most powerful ELUL possible. The parsha brings us one of the most important phrases and concepts in the Torah. The Torah commands us:



Now I say wholehearted, because I have to translate it as something. But the word really is tamim, and that's what we're going to go dive deep into this Fellowship because when we think about teshuva, the first taf of teshuva is tamim. It is to be wholehearted, to be pure,

and at the heart of ELUL, it's the beginning of this month, we're being called to return to the beginning, return to that innocence, return to that tamimut.

But what exactly does the word tamim mean? It's usually translated as wholehearted, simple, complete, with HaShem. It's like something that isn't defined in one word in English because it just has layers of meaning in the Hebrew. It's not really about perfection, it's really about wholeness, about living without duplicity, without masks, without a need to pretend. Tamim is about living with authenticity. And ELUL invites us to strip away the layers and stand before God with sincerity.

And the first time we encounter the word, tamim in the Torah is at the very beginning, the very beginning with Abraham. And that's how Abraham was in some ways was laying the foundation for every believer to be tamim, is the cornerstone. In Bereshith, chapter 17, verse 1, when God first enters into a covenant with Abraham, He says:

...walk before Me and be whole (tamim)

• Bereshit 17:1

And so, that's how the covenant begins, with being tamim, with a heart that is whole before God. And this is the basis for Abraham's relationship with God, for God's covenant with Abraham. Walk before Me

and be tamim. It's like, I really got to know, what does tamim really mean? This is pretty foundational at this point.

Also, Ya'acov, Jacob, the father of our people is described as an ish tam, an innocent man dwelling in tents. That is the first description that we have of Jacob as he's a grown man – an innocent man, an ish tam, which is the root of the word, tamim. And so, the father of the people of Israel is defined in like one attribute and he's given the word, tamim. The foundational reality of Abraham, the first command to Abraham before he receives his covenant is to be tamim. Only an ish tam, a pure, innocent man can give birth to the entire nation of Israel. And it's like this concept of tamim is so fundamental. It would be careless not to delve in and discover what it means for us today. It's what ELUL is really all about.

And so the challenge for us in ELUL is to be tamim with HaShem, to be tamim with God. And on a basic level, it means to walk before HaShem in honesty, in sincerity, in simplicity. And Ari was invited to be a guest of honor at a very special wedding tonight that you're going to hear all about in just a moment. He made a video to enhance this Fellowship and shine a new light on these ancient words of the Torah, to be pure and wholehearted with HaShem, your God. So enjoy this message from Ari.

Ari

Shalom, my friends, I'm not with you live on this week's Fellowship. What you're watching is something I prerecorded earlier today, meaning right now. And I can't wait to tell you why. Because it's for a really good reason. In fact, it's for a reason so beautiful, and so exciting, that's it's a living, breathing manifestation of what this parsha is truly about – believing in HaShem, trusting in HaShem, surrendering to HaShem, and walking with HaShem every step of the way.



So where am I right now? I'm at a wedding. But not just any wedding. This is the wedding of two extraordinary souls, the radiant and deeply special Eliza Teplitzki and the kind and inspiring and remarkable, Rabbi Leo Dee. Some of you may recognize these names, but for those who don't, let me share who they are. Eliza Teplitzki has been a dear friend and close, beloved partner in life in some ways with my wife, Shaena for many years. Long before Shaena and I were married, she and

Eliza were single together in Jerusalem, walking side by side through that long, sometimes difficult journey of searching for their husbands. And to the naked eye, it never made sense, why does one incredible, beautiful woman find her husband at 22 while another equally incredible, beautiful woman remains single into her 40's? What's going on here?

Eliza spent years searching, again and again she would meet someone, date, realize he wasn't the one, try again – not the right one. Most people in that situation might grow weary, lose faith, maybe even give up hope, become jaded. But not Eliza, she never gave up. She held onto her faith, she persevered, she kept walking with HaShem.

And Rabbi Leo Dee, while on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Rabbi Dee was traveling north to Tiberias from his home in the Judean village of Efrat with his beloved wife, Lucy, and their five children. Because they couldn't fit all into one car, Lucy drove in a separate vehicle with their daughters – 20-year-old Mia, and 15-year-old Rina. While Rabbi Leo Dee drove just a minute ahead with his other children – Karen, Tali, and Yehuda. And in that single minute, everything changed. The car carrying Lucy and the girls was rammed off the road by a terrorist gunman, two terrorist gunmen, who proceeded to shoot each of them point blank in the head. CNN called it a shoot out. Mia and Rina were killed instantly, Lucy fought for her life for two days before succumbing to her wounds. The entire nation was shattered, broken. I was at the funerals. Devastation doesn't begin to describe it.

And yet in the midst of unimaginable grief, the faith, dignity, and strength with which Rabbi Dee and his children responded, uplifted the entire country and touched hearts across the world. And now, three years later, as you sit here watching this Fellowship, I am, God-willing, at this very moment, dancing and singing with the friends of Eliza and Rabbi Dee, celebrating a wedding whose light, I believe will shine out and illuminate the entire world. It feels almost impossible, out of the ashes of unthinkable loss, HaShem has written a new chapter. A chapter of hope, of healing, of joy. This is not just a wedding, it is a living testimony that even when we cannot understand the path, when we keep walking with HaShem, He leads us exactly where we need to be.



Eliza's decades of steadfast faith, never giving up. Rabbi's Dee's unimaginable faith, clinging to emunah in the darkest valley. And now HaShem has brought these two extraordinary souls together. You know this wedding is more than a celebration of love, it is a revelation, a manifestation of the deepest truth of this parsha – to believe in HaShem, to trust in HaShem, to surrender to HaShem, and to walk with Him, even, and especially when the way is hidden.

In Parashat Shoftim, the Torah warns us not to turn to diviners, fortune tellers, or those who claim to reveal the future.

Be wholehearted with  
Hashem your God.

• Devarim 18:13

Rashi explains:

Walk with him with simplicity. Put your hope in Him and do not attempt to investigate the future. Whatever it may be that comes upon you, accept it whole-heartedly, and then you shall be with Him and become His portion.

• Rashi on Devarim 18:13

I personally find such strength and guidance from these words as I have them engraved right above my holy books in my living room.



It's right there and on this beautiful Jerusalem stone, created by our good friend, Yehuda Hartstark. Reach out to us if you'd like one, too. I'm sure we could arrange that.

Because this commandment touches the deepest point of faith, to want to

know what the future is, on some level, to try to escape the very purpose of life which is to trust HaShem today in the uncertainty, in the unknowing. That is the purpose. If the outcome were revealed to us, the test of faith would disappear.

The Ba'al Shem Tov explains that tamim means more than simple. It means whole, complete, unfractured. Faith means not living split between what is and what might be. It means surrendering the illusion of control, and walking with HaShem as a child walks with his father, hand-in-hand, step by step, without needing to know what lies at the end of the road.

The truth is, that there is a great secret here. Our sages teach that the future is concealed, even from the angels. Because hiddenness itself is holy. The concealment itself creates a space for our emunah. Rebbe Nachman teaches, the whole world is a very narrow bridge, and the main thing is not to be afraid. But how? By knowing that not knowing is itself a gift. Because it



forces us into relationship with HaShem at that very moment. And that is the reason we're here on that earth. That is the beauty and the gift of life, itself.

And here we are, in the midst of this war, in this midst of this long, season of struggle. None of us know how it will end. Will there be victory? Will there be escalation? Will the nations rise against us? Will redemption break through suddenly? We cannot know. And we're not meant to know. Because HaShem in His infinite wisdom has placed us here so that our faith muscles can grow strong. If we saw the future, there would be no need for courage. If we saw the end of the story, there would be no need for trust. But because the future is hidden, we're invited, each of us, to rise up in emunah, to strengthen ourselves, and to strengthen each other, and to be tamim with HaShem.

This is our calling on ELUL, in these days of tshuva. To return not only from our sins, but from our illusion that we can control life by knowing more, predicting more, worrying more. To return instead to the simplicity of walking with HaShem, wholeheartedly, steady, loyal. The Lubavitcher Rebbe, he teaches us that faith is not the knowledge that everything will turn out good. Faith is the knowledge that everything is already good. Because HaShem is guiding the world. My friends, the uncertainty of our world is not a bug, it's a feature, it is the womb of redemption, it's the place where the light is hidden, waiting for us to trust.

So as we stand in these uncertain days, we hold onto the verse of Shoftim. We release the need to know the future. We embrace the opportunity to walk faithfully into the unknown. And in that very act, we're already fulfilling our mission – to bring more faith, more light, more trust into the world and to prepare ourselves for the day when the hidden will be revealed and the Name of HaShem will be one.

And so, as we stand together in this sacred moment, we're reminded that a Jewish wedding, that a wedding is more than two souls uniting, it's a glimpse of redemption, itself. A chuppah, the canopy, is a microcosm of the Bet HaMikdash, a place where heaven and earth meet, where tears of the past are lifted into the joy of the future.



So tonight, Rabbi Dee and Eliza are not only building a new home, they're building a sanctuary of hope for all of us. Their courage, their love, their willingness to begin again teaches us what it means to truly walk with HaShem. So may HaShem bless this couple with unshakeable joy, with children who will carry

their light forward, with a home overflowing with Torah, and with laughter, and with peace. May their love be a song that strengthens the people of Israel, and may the light of their new beginning join the great light of redemption, soon to shine to all of am Yisrael and the entire world. Amen.

Jeremy

Amen, thank you, Ari, that's just absolutely gorgeous. Like what a time to be alive and to see these miracles unfolding. Rabbi Leo Dee is a real force of nature. And watching his life is just a testimony to the power of emunah. He exemplifies pure emunah. It always comes back to that verse, tamim, to be pure. But what does that word really mean?

So now what I want to do is, I want to dive deep and go over about 3,000 years of Jewish wisdom, trying to unpack what that verse, that command means to us, and really kind of help to integrate it into our being. So the first is Rashi. Rashi, just like what Ari said, don't probe too much into the future. Don't try to control the outcomes, trust in HaShem fully, right now. That's why the verse comes right after the command not to have sorcery, not to do divinations, not to go into the spirits, to look into the future, just be tamim with God. That's Rashi based on the Sifre, the Oral Torah.

The Ramban writes that it's really living with integrity, aligning your whole heart with God, rather than being divided or duplicitous. The Radak, he sees tamim as just to have trust in Divine providence. A wholehearted person doesn't question why things happen. He just trusts that they're from HaShem, that's really what tamim means. Whatever hits me, it's not like I have the intellect to understand why. I just trust that it's from God and everything is for the good.

The Sefer HaChinuch says this is one of the 613 commandments of the Torah. And he explains it's really about purity of service. It's like to worship with integrity, without any ulterior motives. You're not trying to get the world to come, you're not trying to get rewarded. You're just serving HaShem with a pure heart.

And so, those are all beautiful explanations, and I want to explain, or at least share some translations that I found. And of course, there's a zillion translations, and each one is a commentary, and they're all trying to explain in one word what the word tamim means. They have to choose something, none of them are right and none of them are wrong. They all express an aspect of what it means to be tamim with HaShem.



Thou shalt be whole-hearted with the Lord thy God.  
• JPS Tanakh (1917)

Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God.  
• KJV (King James Version)

You must be blameless before the Lord your God.  
• NIV / ESV / NASB

Be completely loyal to God, your God.  
• The Message

You must have integrity [in dealing] with the Lord your God.  
• GOD'S WORD Translation

So here we have, wholehearted, perfect, blameless, completely loyal and integrity. Now you put all those together, we're really getting an idea of what it means to be tamim. Because you really have to say almost all of them to get a full picture

here.

But now we've explored the translations from Hebrew into English. And we've tried to like capture the word in its essence. But now, I want us to go into the Hebrew itself and uncover the treasures that are being held for us there.



Wholehearted, let's just take that translation. Tamim in Hebrew. If you see, the word tamim, actually ends with a yud and a mem. It ends with an im, and it seems like the word in Hebrew, when it ends in im, that word is plural. For example, sefer is book. Seferim is books, many books. So tamim ends

with an im, it means that tamim somehow has something to do with plurality. It's hinting at the fact that something is like...there is multiplicity to this tamim idea. Grammatically, the word is not plural. But it seems inherent in the word that there's an element of plurality that exists in the world. And so, I think that's really a key.

See a human being, we're never just one flat layer. We're made of mind, heart, body, soul, instincts, aspirations, and in that way we're filled with contradictions just pulling us in different directions. To be tamim doesn't mean to like erase one part of us. But actually, it means to align them, to bring the plurality within us into a state of integrity before God. Integrity is a great word that can really help us understand tamim on an inner dimension. Integrity means integrated. A person with integrity has taken all the aspects of his personality, integrated them into his being. He's not fragmented, he's not disintegrated, it's as if the word tamim, itself, is whispering to us. Wholeness is achieved when the many become one.

And so, none of us are singular. Each one of us is made up of so many layers – a body, a soul, intellect, emotions, doubt, faith, fears, dreams. It's like those parts inherently pull us in opposite directions. But Elul comes to remind us that being tamim doesn't mean erasing part of ourselves, or pretending they don't exist. It's not like, "I abolish all fear and now I trust in the

Lord.” It means bringing all of those pieces together where we are, the plural within us, into harmony, into alignment before HaShem. I mean when God first called Avraham into the covenant, He said:

Walk before me and be tamim.

That’s pretty significant. What did that mean for Avraham? He’s like saying, “Before we make this covenant, Avraham, I need you to be tamim.” It’s like to unify every part of your life, your family, your faith, your land, your future. All of that, under God. To take the multiplicity of who he was and make it into one whole in service of HaShem. That was the call of Avraham.

So the avodah, the spiritual work of ELUL is slowly, but surely making God King of our lives. That’s what happens on Rosh Hashana, that’s what we’re blowing the shofar, we’re like coronating the King. Like the King is in the room now. And God is calling us to prioritize the ultimate good we can imagine in our lives and my service is to order everything in my life into place within that hierarchy, where God’s goodness is supreme.

So everything in life fits within a bigger holistic picture, and it fits in its place when that’s the crown. When God is crowned King, everything then fits in within that order. And that is tamim. So be tamim also means, do what’s right because it’s right. To live a good life because it’s good. Not for reward, not for the world to come. It’s not about anything other than to just be true to our inner most self, to do good because it’s good, to be true because it’s true. There is no other agenda. It’s pure and wholehearted. That’s the essence of tamim.

It’s like Western religions, they get us all obsessed with the world to come. Islam is entirely obsessed with the world to come and what they get in that world. And it’s like, “No, no. To be tamim is to say, ‘I’m just going to serve God just because I want to serve God. I’m not really thinking about anything I’m going to get from it. I’m not trying to achieve something from Him. I’m just being good.’”

And that’s why we blow the shofar every morning on ELUL. The shofar is not a polished instrument. It’s raw, it’s cracked, it’s imperfect. And then breath passes through it and then it releases the most piercing, authentic sound. It’s like the cry of our soul, a breath of spirit, through the horn of an animal. It’s like no sophistication here, no tuning, it’s just the call. That’s what it means to be tamim.

And so, now I want to try to take this to a very practical place. The Torah places the foundational verse of wholehearted with God right after the command to not get involved with sorcery or divination. It's Deuteronomy, chapter 18, verses 11 and 12:

There shall not be found among you.... one who practices divination, an enchanter, a soothsayer, a sorcerer, or one who casts spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who consults the dead. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations, the Lord your God drives them out from before you.

• Devarim 18:11-12

Be wholehearted with Hashem your God.

• Devarim 18:13

Be wholehearted with the Lord your God. They're like juxtaposed, one after the other here. So by Scripture alone, these two concepts are connected. Being tamim, being pure

and wholehearted with God is antithetical to sorcery and divination.

And Rashi explains the essence of the command to be tamim. Be wholehearted with the Lord your God. Conduct yourself with Him with simplicity. Look forward to Him, do not seek to know the future, but rather accept whatever comes upon you with simplicity. Then you will be with God to be His portion. So Rashi, based on the sages of Israel, says that tamim is not only about integrating the parts of who we are internally, it's about where you turn your focus externally. It's like, don't look for ways to know the future. Rather, whatever comes upon you, just accept it with simplicity. Don't chase after the future or try to control or predict and see what will happen. Instead walk with God in simplicity and trust. That's the essence.

So, now, I want to bring these two concepts together. Tamim, as an internal wholeness, and tamim, walking with God in simplicity and trust and not looking into the future and trying to control the outcomes of our lives. How do those actually stem? How do those work together?

And so, I found this remarkable, beautiful teaching from the Aish Kodesh, the Holy Fire. Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the rabbi of the Warsaw ghetto. He was entrusted to be the spiritual leader of the ghetto and give people hope when hope was hard to come by and strengthen people's faith when faith was challenged to its edge. And it was challenged by the Nazis and their evil.



And that's one of the only pictures that we have of the rabbi. And every Shabbat he would address the community. The Jews of the ghetto would gather. And he wrote down all of his sermons, I believe on toilet paper because there just wasn't enough paper. And he hid the toilet paper under his tiles in his house and ultimately, he was murdered by the Nazis. But after the Holocaust, Jews went into his home and they actually found his writings hidden under the tiles, and now we can learn his teachings in our generation in the mountains of Judea.

And so, here's what his teachings speaks about, being tamim, being wholehearted, and Rashi's explanation. Here's what he says:

Do not seek to know the future, but rather accept what comes upon you with simplicity, then you will be with God to be His portion.

So now, the rabbi is explaining his understanding of Rashi. These are his words, the holy words of the Holy Fire:

It is clear amidst all this suffering, that if only everyone knew that they would be rescued tomorrow, then a great majority, even those who have already despaired, would be able to find courage.

This sermon was written in 1941.

The problem is that they cannot see any end to the darkness. This is how to understand Rashi. The meaning of being wholehearted with HaShem your God, even if you are broken and oppressed, nevertheless be wholehearted, take strength in HaShem your God because you know that HaShem is with you in your suffering. And do not attempt to project into the future saying, "I cannot see an end to the darkness." But simply accept whatever happens to you and then you will be with God to be His portion that day.

So the Aish Kodesh is saying something really powerful to people who find themselves in really challenging times. People despair when they look into the future and they just see darkness and they don't see anyway out. If they knew that tomorrow they would be saved, their troubles would end. Anyone can get through one day. It's only when we look into the future and we say, "I don't even know what's going to happen. This is insane, it's never going to end." That's when you get into despair. And so, what does he say?

The Aish Kodesh is teaching us one of the most powerful tools in coping with life's challenges. Live in the day, one day at a time. Don't look into the future at all. It's not about sorcery or about divinations. Just don't look into the future. Just live presently with HaShem.

So now, when you read Rashi, you read it in that light. Not in the context of divination and sorcery, but in the context of living through the challenges of life. Do not seek to know the future, but rather accept whatever comes upon you with simplicity. Then you will be with God to be His portion. That's what Rashi is saying. Rashi is saying, "To be tamim is to live everyday and accept what comes upon you with simplicity. Don't even look into the future. Just live one day at a time."

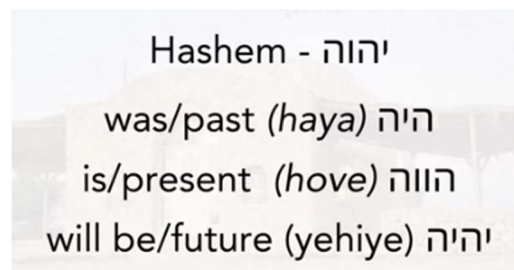
And I want to tell you a story that happened to me when I first moved to the Farm because the Aish Kodesh lived through the worst. And I have a picture, that picture actually, at the bookshelf at the entrance to my home. And aside from his beautiful teachings, I think it's just such a useful reminder for me to know where we were just decades ago. And one morning I was about to leave my house out of my front door, and I gazed over at the picture and I saw the Aish Kodesh and I thought to myself, "Every day, he left his home in the Warsaw ghetto and he opened his door and he saw Jews starving in the streets and swastikas and Nazis and SS officers torturing Jews and maybe even executing Jews on the spot. He saw just manifest evil unleashed in the world."

And then I imagined, what would happen if the Aish Kodesh were to open his door and somehow enter into my eyes and see what I see when I look out of my home in the Arugot Farm. I see palm trees in the mountains and olive trees. And I see Jewish children shepherding sheep in the mountains where King David shepherded his sheep, a beautiful House of Prayer, the children are speaking Hebrew, tours from all over the world are coming to learn about the book of Psalms and the place where King David wrote it. He would look at the Arugot Farm and I just know he would think, "I've been transported from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Garden of Eden. I just live in Paradise, what is going on here?"

And it struck me, Israel today is already a window into the Garden of Eden, if you have the right eyes to see it. If you just live within the day and you just open your eyes for what is. And you're not influenced by the media scaring you, and the news faking you, and all the different things that are out there, you just see Israel where we've come from and where we are. It's the simple truth – we are so close to returning to the Garden of Eden in the Land of Israel today.

And that moment had such a lasting impact on me. And in some ways, it's a part of the puzzle. Being tamim happens in like the moments of wholeheartedness. Integrating all the parts of our

personality happens in moments, in times when I choose, in times when I engage, in moments of inspiration. It's not like a decision, "I'm going to be integrated and therefore, from this point on, I'm an integrated human being." It's like in moments of enlightenment, it's in moment when you engage with the world, you choose and you can make a choice as an integrated whole, or you can be fragmented and be pulled by your lusts or your impulses or by your instincts. Or you can actually make a choice as a whole human being.



And that's why it's the key to tshuva, because the pathway to turning to HaShem is revealed in HaShem's Name. And so, if you look up on the screen now, HaShem is literally three words mixed into one.

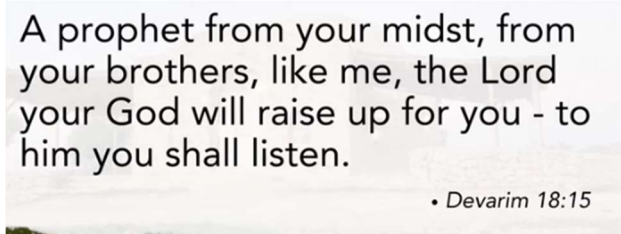
So the Name of HaShem, His essence, His Name of love, His relationship with us, it combines all of these times. When the past becomes the present and turns into the future, it's only a moment. And once you see it, it's already gone, it's the very present moment that is constantly becoming. Living in that present moment of becoming is the essence of tamim. There is no future to worry about, and there's no past to regret. It's just in that moment of becoming, just to be with HaShem purely, to be present in that moment, that is when you can be fully integrated, just in that engagement.

And so, when choices are made, that's when integration happens. It's not like, "Ahh, I'm forever integrated now, I'm a changed man." It's just in moments, and those moments happen when we engage and we're fully aware of what's happening right before us. Rav Aryeh Levin was one of the great rabbis before the establishment of the State of Israel. He was really a Tzadik, a real righteous man. He was the rabbi of all the underground fighters. And he would go to all the British prisons and visit them, and he didn't care about the politics. He really just loved so many Jews.

And one time he was asked, "Rabbi, are you one of the 36 hidden righteous people in the world?" Because there's a tradition that there are 36 hidden righteous men and women that are literally holding the world up. And he said, "You know, sometimes." And he's teaching that there's moments of choice. And when he chooses right, in those moments he really is one of the 36 righteous people. But it's not that every moment he's living at that level. It's in moments when he chooses to live that way that he kind of elevates himself to really be tamim.



And then we can really understand the next verse in the Torah portion and their connection to each other. The Torah speaks about prophets in Devarim, chapter 18, verse 15:



A prophet from your midst, from  
your brothers, like me, the Lord  
your God will raise up for you - to  
him you shall listen.

• Devarim 18:15

So on the surface, these verses are talking about Joshua, they're talking about the great prophets that will come, Yeshayahu, Jeremiah, the voices that carried God's word throughout history.

But the Ba'al Shem Tov reveals a real deeper layer here. He taught that these words are also a call to each and everyone of us. You see prophecy is not just an echo of the distant past, it's the soul's ability to hear the Voice of God, even right now, through our intuition, through our inspiration, through that quiet whisper inside our hearts. If you purify your heart, if you align your life with the Torah and with the truth, then you can begin to hear that voice. Maybe not the thunder on Sinai, but as that still small voice that guides you through life's decisions. And that is the prophetic spark within Israel.

And maybe that's why the word tamim hints to the plural ending with im. One needs to live whole with the Torah that's outside of him, with God's word that's guiding him. And one needs to live with integrity with HaShem's voice inside of him that's calling him from the inside. Both are Hashem's words speaking to us. And to be tamim in plural means that everything is integrated and whole.

And now it all connects. Don't look into divinations, don't cut yourself off by sorcery. It's like you're literally cutting yourself off from the voice of HaShem that could guide you in your own life. When can that inner Divine voice be heard? Not when we're thinking about the past. Not when we're worrying about the future. It's just in the present moment when we're actually listening to what's happening in our lives right now. That's why HaShem's most personal relational Name is guiding us to connect with Him in the moment that keeps on becoming. Like if you can actually tap into the moment that is right now, that's when you can actually hear.

And that's why Rashi ends his commentary with, then you will be with God to be His portion.

To be tamim means to be with God, to be His portion. That's why this time of year ELUL, that's why we always read this Torah portion the first Shabbat of ELUL. It's bringing us back to the fundamentals, it's bringing us back to the basics, wherever you are. Tamim doesn't mean perfect, it doesn't mean you've done nothing wrong. It just means you're being sincere and authentic.

And right now, we live in a world of fake news, artificial intelligence. Authenticity and sincerity, it's a scarce commodity nowadays. And that's really all we're being asked for. For each of us to just be simple and authentic. And so when we say that tshuva is a return, it's a return to being tamim. When that inner calling from the highest place penetrates our hearts and our minds and integrates into our lives, there's no more separation. It's simple, it's life, it's whole.

And so, this week's Torah portion, we always read, it gives us the most important invitation in the entire Torah. Be wholehearted with the Lord your God.

And so, we've seen that tamim doesn't mean perfect, it means whole, it means integrated, it means living without masks, without duplicity, without endless chase to control the tomorrow. Rashi teaches us don't look into the future, don't seek to know what will be, instead walk with God and trust and accept the present with simplicity and then you'll be with Him.

The Aish Kodesh, the Rabbi of the Warsaw Ghetto, he tells Jews, despair comes when we look into the future and can't see an end. But hope, faith, and strength come when we live one day at a time with HaShem in this moment. That's tamim. And the Ba'al Shem, he says, "The other side of tamim is when we purify our hearts, we live with sincerity, we awaken that prophetic spark that's inside us, we align everything like an antenna to actually tune into the quiet voice of the soul that guides us with HaShem's wisdom."

So it's not sorcery, not illusions, it's like the true inner voice that HaShem speaks only in the present moment. And so, what is the work of ELUL? It's to bring all the many parts of ourselves into alignment, to stop chasing control of the future, to listen to the whisper of HaShem's voice inside us, to be authentic, to be sincere, to be whole. And maybe, in a world filled with noise and fake promises and artificial truths, there's just nothing more radical and more courageous and more holy than simply being tamim. Just being wholehearted with God, that's a break from everything of this world.

And so, now, I have a very special treat with you. I have literally the manifestation of tamim in the world. I have something for you to literally see what it is to be tamim. And Tehila is here, she wants to share a Torah with the Fellowship. And she didn't want to miss the first week of ELUL, but not only that, we're going to take some time very soon and host a Fellowship Connection together, give us a chance to really connect, to have a dialogue. And so, I just got so much positive feedback from the last Fellowship Connection. I just said, "Ok, we just got to do this more often." And now I have Tehila onboard. So that's really fun. And so, if I wanted to...if you check in Wikipedia, what does it mean to be tamim with God? I think Tehila's face might just appear. That's just how wonderful she is. And so, with that, I want to invite Tehila Gimpel.

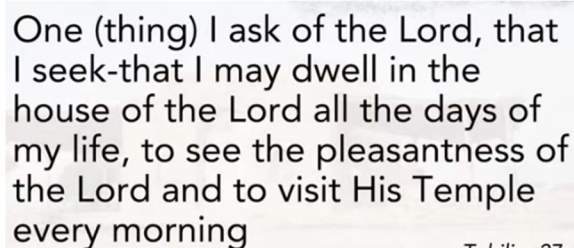
Tehila

Wow, with an introduction like that, I might as well just leave. That's so much pressure. Thank you, darling, very over the top as always and undeserved, but thank you for the kind words.

So, hey guys, so nice to see everybody. So here we are in ELUL, again, I feel very blessed to be together with you guys for another ELUL, another process. But I have to be honest. This year ELUL did not arrive for me with, let's say, bells and whistles. You know what I mean? Like sometimes, you're just like, "Ok, ELUL, is coming, yeah," and some years it just shows up and you're somewhere between exhausted, survival mode, day to day struggles, trying to keep it together, maybe you're exhausted, maybe you're distracted, not necessarily where you should be according to the ELUL playbook.

So, and you know sometimes I try to strengthen myself, "I'm going to listen to inspiring lectures," then sometimes it makes me even more nervous, like everyone seems to be in this super holy mindset. Do any of you guys have like you can't sleep at night, and then, yeah, so I'm not alone. We should all talk, we should start a Fellowship Connection like three in the morning. So you know that feeling where you can't fall asleep, but then you start stressing about how tired you're going to be tomorrow, which makes you stay awake longer? Right? That's like my trap, because I'm just like...now I'm getting into more panic. So the more I'm hearing about people doing tshuva and I'm not learning about tshuva, I'm like, "Oh my God, but I'm not there, I'm not catching up. Oh my gosh." So it's like that for me.

So I was looking to find myself some encouragement and I found myself drawn to Psalm 27, which is the Psalm that's traditionally read twice a day in the month of ELUL, straight through till the end of the holidays of Tishrei. And I love this Psalm because you know when I moved to Israel in 1997, it was the beginning of ELUL, and I found this Psalm just gave me so much strength. I clung onto it. So it's like very dear to my heart, it always brings me back to that kind of challenging time in my life where I was a young teenage girl coming to this new place and I found so much strength in it. So when I'm feeling like I need some encouragement, I often find myself going back to Psalm 27. And verse 4, David says:



One (thing) I ask of the Lord, that I seek-that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to see the pleasantness of the Lord and to visit His Temple every morning

• Tehilim 27

So he's saying, I'm seeking this one thing. This translation says his "Temple," I think in the Hebrew it's actually His Sanctuary. You know this verse sort of reminds me of when my kids are going to bed and they say, "Can I just have one more thing? Can I just have one more glass of water? Can I just have one more hug?" Because

it's not one thing! It's never one thing, right? It's never one thing. And so, what's going on here? That's not one thing.

One thing I ask of the Lord, to dwell in His House of the Lord all of the days of my life, to see the pleasantness of the Lord, and to visit His sanctuary.

Wait, isn't that three things? Like, I'm not losing it, right? So what I think is, David is not misleading us. He's not my kids at bedtime. He's telling us the truth obviously. So, this must actually be one thing. So how do we make that work?

I think it's not a list of three separate goals, but a roadmap and a process of one goal that has three stages. So I think that we're having here a goal that sounds to me like building a relationship with HaShem, and then there's an order to it, there's stages to it. The first stage is to dwell in His House, and then it's to see God's pleasantness, and then to visit His sanctuary. So what does that mean? What does that translate to in actual life?

I think David is teaching us something really, really profound about being in a relationship with HaShem and being in a relationship in general. Where does a relationship with HaShem actually start? It starts like anything, it starts at the door, by showing up. That's the foundation. It's not dramatic, it's not exciting, it's not high, it's being there, living there, being in the House. What does it mean to be in the House? It's to be there day in and day out, regular days, good days, hard times, not so hard times, when you don't feel anything, when you do feel something. To dwell is like a commitment, it's to be present, even when things are not perfect. And it's true as a spouse.

When Jeremy had his accident and he had a terrible concussion, and he wasn't quite himself, I often would say, "Marriage is so beautiful because it's so much more than that. Of course it includes love, but it also just includes the commitment to be there every day. Just to dwell there every day, whether you're fun to be with, whether you're not well, whether you're not at your best. I don't know if you're ever going to be your best. But I'm committing to dwelling in that place with you, to be committed."

And it's true as a spouse, it's true as a parent. When you say to your child, "I'm going to be here. You might not really enjoy me very much. You might not like me, dear teenager, but I am here. I am going to dwell here and be present for you. I'm going to dwell in this house and be here for you whenever you need."

In the context of the Psalm, I think what David is saying is, “I am choosing to dwell in the House of God, to live a life committed to God. I might not feel anything, but every morning I will wake up and I will show up, ready for you, HaShem to call on me. You might not call on me today, so I’m going to come back tomorrow. You might not call on me tomorrow, but I’m going to come back every day. And if you call on me, you call on me, and if you don’t, but I am here.”

And what happens when you live in that consciousness, in a relationship with God, or in a relationship with anybody, the next step is something that wouldn’t happen if you didn’t do the first step. After dwelling and choosing to be committed, even when there is no obvious reward, the beauty and the pleasantness starts to show itself very slowly, very subtly. And it’s a choice, it’s a choice to see the pleasantness, to see the good. I’m going to see the good in your providence, HaShem, even when I’m in pain, and even when it’s difficult. I’ve decided to live in this House and my day to day is going to be looking for Your pleasantness. The same thing with a person. I’m committed to you, I am going to seek out what is good and beautiful in you today because I’ve made that commitment to live in the house and then to see the beauty.

And then, I think the last step is to visit the Sanctuary, to visit the Sanctuary, that’s like finally. Those are those peak moments, the elation, the intensity, the moments of prayer that suddenly you have tears and you feel so connected or when you’re in a holy place and your whole soul is just like humming. There are visits to the Sanctuary. But David is so cautious in his word. You live in the House of God, but you visit in the Sanctuary. It’s like within the House, there’s that one room that’s the Sanctuary. There’s like that one place that’s even more holy. You’re in the House all the time, but if you’re in the House, sometimes you’re going to get a chance to visit the Sanctuary. If you didn’t make the commitment to live in the House, you’d never find your way to the Sanctuary. You visit there, it’s rare, it’s precious, it’s not predictable. But it only happens when you’ve built your life on this foundation of dwelling in the House because you’ve shown up day after day. You can’t live in the Sanctuary, it’s too intense, it’s too much. But it’s a place that you can visit and that’s ok.

And I think that that’s really the idea of ELUL. Sometimes I don’t feel this massive elation of yeah! I’m in ELUL, I’m in the Sanctuary! It’s about moving back into the House. HaShem, maybe I’ve wandered out of the House, somewhere into the backyard and like over the fence, and I’ve gone a little bit far away from the House. I’m coming back to the House. I might have been outside all year long, I might have been distant, but the House is there, the door is open, and I might not see the beauty yet, but I’m going to come in. That’s ELUL. I’m going to come in.

And then we hope to get to the High Holidays in Tishrei and have a moment where we can just visit in the Sanctuary. But it's a Sanctuary we only get to because in ELUL we made the commitment to live in the House.

So, you know, David is saying...David could have asked for anything, but he's saying, "I'm only going to ask for one thing. I want miracles, I want bells and whistles." He's saying, "I want my relationship, I'm not asking for any shortcuts. I'm asking for You, HaShem, to open the door for me and I'll do the work, I'll do the process." He could have asked for a miracle, or asked for spiritual ecstasy, but he's saying, "Just let me in and I will commit to slowly doing that work, to just dwelling in the House and looking for that beauty in Your providence in the world so that maybe You'll let me visit the Sanctuary."

So, with that, I bless you guys, all with a beautiful month of ELUL. May we all dwell in the House of HaShem, and I'm bringing back Jeremy and he can wrap up and we can do our Connection.

Jeremy

All right. So here's what I want to do guys. I want to bless you all with the most tamim blessing, the blessing the priests of Israel would bless all of Israel with from the Temple, the blessing that I bless my children with every Friday night, the blessing we end every Fellowship with. And in this time, from this place, and then we'll just go right into a Fellowship Connection. And so, may you all be blessed from Zion.

Aaron blessing (Hebrew)

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

