

Session 241

Ki Teitzei – Preparing for the Most Important Year of Our Lives

7 September 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkyLaR9qgbY>

Ari

Shalom, shalom, good to see everybody. Can you see me, can you hear me? That's great, that's great, it's good to see you. The truth is, this morning, I did not think that this Fellowship was going to happen, at least not including me. Since Thursday, my kids just started school, everybody just started school. I think in the world, or at least in Israel. And I guess that's when all of the germs mix up. And since Thursday, there's been some sort of stomach virus that's circulating in my house, through my kids. Thank God it's not a long protracted one. It's just between 12 and 24 hours. But it's intense. And somehow my wife and I have convinced ourselves that grownups are immune from this whole thing.

Well, when I woke up this morning at 5 a.m. for my patrol, I learned the truth. Grownups are not immune from this. So it's been a rough day. But with HaShem's help, I've been able to fight my way through, and with a lot of encouragement from Tabitha and Jeremy. But Tabitha especially, saying, "It's our family. You can just go on there. You don't need to have it polished. If you need to bring a pail with you and just bend over and throw up in the pail and then just continue, we're all here together. She's just so encouraging that she convinced me. So anyways, I've been able to fight my way through it and it's so good to see all of you.

And it's been hard, but when I think of the challenges that so many of you are facing. The wars that so many of you are fighting and the extraordinary faith and courage and strength with which you're fighting them? It's humbling and it gives me strength. I feel like sometimes you fall by the wayside a little bit. You know here in Israel we're fighting wars on all of these different fronts and the world is against us, and you're standing with us. But you're also, really, I'm grateful, so grateful to Ardelle for putting these booklets together, for aggregating and receiving all of your prayer requests and your prayers because it really is so important to me. And so thank you for that, Ardelle, and thank you for everyone that's sending all of your prayer messages and requests to her. I hope it just keeps going up more and more and for your prayers for us. You know we don't always or ever for that matter, necessarily unload all of our stuff. But you know that we're going through a lot here. Not just in the war, in life, and we feel your prayers and we really feel you holding us up.

And so I thought I would start before introducing Jeremy, I thought I would start for a blessing for each of us in our individual wars that we're fighting together, for the wars of Israel, for the wars of this world.

HaShem, Avinu Malkeinu, our Father and our King, we thank You for the blessings that You pour on our Fellowship family, for healing that is already unfolding. HaShem, right now we're thinking in our hearts of all those that are needing healing, that you're sending healing to, for progress and health and in recovery, for children learning and growing, for families gathering together, for those that are divided coming back together, and for the beauty of Your creation and all the hope that You give us. HaShem, we lift up before You the prayer requests, the cries of so many hearts for those walking through pain and illness. Bring strength and healing and comfort. Give us reserves that we didn't even know that we had. Reserves that only come from You.

For those facing brokenness in marriage and families, bring reconciliation and sustenance and peace. For those carrying the weight of financial hardship, open the doors of opportunity and supply every need. For children, for the youth, for young people, plant in them love for truth, wisdom in their studies, and protection, physically in body and in spirit and for those seeking Fellowship and belonging, so many of us, surround them, surround us with Your people filled with love and encouragement. For all those who are weary, renew their strength and vigor. We pray, HaShem, for Israel and the Jewish people, protect our soldiers, comfort the bereaved, release the captives and bring shalom l'Yerushalayim. Bring peace to Jerusalem.

Guide world leaders in justice and may truth overcome lies among the nations. As we enter and find ourselves in the midst of ELUL, may we meet You our King in the field, close to us, compassionate to us, calling us to walk faithfully into the unknown with joy, today, tomorrow and into the future. There is none beside You, HaShem. Amen.

Anyways, you know, there's a lot more to say, but I think this is a good time for Jeremy to come in. Jeremy also very much said, "Ari, I'm there with you if you can't do this Fellowship, if you have to pull off to the side for a second, I'm there for you." So, I appreciate that, Jeremy. So, good to see you, how are you?

Jeremy

A lot better than you, and that's all I can say. But thank you for making the effort and for hosting the Fellowship today. I mean, you're wearing the soldier of Israel's uniform, and you're just a warrior. And so, thank you for being a warrior for us and for joining us and for leading us in prayer and kind of kicking off the Fellowship. I want you to know because I don't know how

tapped you are into the news, but just a few hours ago, there was a manifest miracle that happened in Israel. And drones were shot from Yemen and many of them were knocked down, but one drone made it all the way into Israel and hit the Ramon airport in southern Israel. And the Ramon airport, that's the one that's being used now to fly Gazan's to different places for medical treatment.



And it hit not just anyplace in the airport, but the drone hit, exploded at the passenger terminal. It could have killed tens of people, a hundred people, I mean a total disaster. And only one person was lightly injured by the glass, the shrapnel, it's like a manifest miracle that happened.

And there are so many miracles that are happening in Israel now that we just...it's not that we take it for granted, it's just overwhelming. There are so many miracles that could have been the disaster of the month. Imagine a drone going into an airport in the passenger terminal, killing so many people. No one was killed. It's just unbelievable.

And I am on my own personal mission with Ari, and I want to try to go back now to October 7th, all the way until today and I just want to record or promote or broadcast the stories of all the miracles. There have been so many and they just come and they go. And there are so many challenges in Israel right now, I just want to make God's Name great. And I want to share the miraculous stories that happened on October 7th, after October 7th, the war with Iran, the ballistic missiles, so much has happened. And I just want to give glory to God because it's just living inside a miracle, it's really hard to see it. But I've been training myself for so many years to see the spice carts and to see the Hand of God in things that shouldn't be. And I just want to bring that message to the world.

Now, I don't know if that's going to change people's lives because they know that there's this person that was killed and there is this other challenge. Ok, I'm not here to answer those questions, I don't know the ways of God and how this is supposed to unfold. But I do know that sharing the miracles of God in the Land of Israel is something the world really needs to focus on because so much coming out of Israel is the negative. So much coming out of Israel is the challenges and the war and the sad stories. I just want the world to know that there's a place where you can see the miracles of Israel.

And so, I would like to pass it on to this Fellowship and if you know, or if you remember a miracle that really touched your heart, and you want to highlight it in this upcoming project that

I'll be working on. It may take me several months to do this project, then WhatsApp me, email me, let me know, and we'll work on it. It will be a project that our Fellowship puts out together in the world. And that could be really beautiful because this week's Torah portion is the anniversary of my moving to the Farm. And I'll never forget because it says...

"When you go out to war..."

I'm like, ok, I'm going out to war for HaShem, and here we are now in the midst of this two year war. And so, God clearly says, that's what this is going to be. You go into the Land of Israel, you're going into a war. And everyone in our own lives, if we are aligned with the destiny of Israel, then we know that our world is going to be a struggle. It's not going to be a walk in the park and just a happy time. We have the world to come for that. This is the world of action, this is the world of doing, this is the world of struggle, that's what Israel means. To struggle with man and to struggle with God. And so, naturally, this week's Torah portion of course ends with how we deal with Amalek, the ultimate evil, the ultimate battle. So it starts off with the frame:

"As you enter into Israel, there will be war."

And it ends with, really one of the most famous verses in the Torah, so let's read it together:

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, 18 how he attacked you on the way, when you were faint and weary, and your stragglers at the rear, and he did not fear God. When Hashem, your God, grants you respite from all your enemies surrounding you in the land that Hashem, your God, is giving you to possess as an inheritance, **you must erase the memory of** Amalek from beneath heaven. **You must not forget.**

• Deuteronomy 24:17-19

So I look at that, I'm like, "Well, that's very peculiar language for the ultimate call to action for our eternal enemy. Remember what Amalek did, and then it says, 'You must erase the memory of Amalek from underneath the heaven.'"

Well, which one is it? Are we supposed to remember Amalek, or are we supposed to erase their memory. If you erase the memory of Amalek, how could you remember them? And so, first let's answer this, first on the pashat level, on like the simple, straight-forward meaning of the text.

And so there are two parts to dealing with Amalek. At the end of the verse, it says, "You must not forget." So you must not forget, clearly means that we're really supposed to remember. But then it says to erase the memory. So what do we do with that? Clearly, it's telling us to

remember and not erase our memory. But it's like very unique language in the Torah that makes such a fundamental principle so unclear. So let's break it down.

First it says, "Remember what Amalek did." And then the second one, the second part of the verse, "You must erase the memory of Amalek from beneath the heaven, totally erase them as a people, as a society, as a culture and religion." And what's amazing, and it's just such a beautiful testimony to the truth of the Bible, in the Land of Israel, although we have the remains of many peoples and cultures and understanding of their pagan religions and their child sacrifices and their trees that they would worship and the Ba'al rituals and gods. The people of Israel made it sure that Amalek has no archeology, nothing remains. No inscriptions, no written records, we know nothing about their gods. The Bible itself gives us no details about Amalek's spiritual life, its rituals, its language.

They are described only in terms of what they did. Their hatred and their hostility to Israel, we remember what they did. But we totally erased their memory as a people and as a society. So, that's pretty remarkable because there's so many ancient people that we know and only Amalek has actually been totally erased. So I think that is the pashat, that is the meaning of the text on a Scriptural level. And even there, there's a really big idea. I mean, one act can erase your legacy in life. One good deed can change things, or one bad thing can change things.

I mean, Ariel Sharon, Israel's Prime Minister, did amazing things for Israel. But today, no one really remembers all that he did. He's just remembered almost exclusively for the disengagement from Gaza that brought the current war to Israel. No one remembers the Nazis sanitation or the health care renewed ideas that they brought into the world. It's just like they did one thing, and that really defined them. Once you turn to evil, that's the act that erases your legacy. And so that's true on a national level with Amalek, but it's also true for a personal level.

And in the month of ELUL, that's really important to remember that the opposite is also true. Tehila, tonight is hosting a live Women of Valor event for ELUL, preparing for Rosh Hashana. And the biblical heroine that she'll be exploring and teaching about is Rachav, Rahab from Jericho, from the book of Joshua. She's been talking to me about this Women of Valor session for weeks. She's been preparing and studying and looking and exploring and believe me, it's going to be amazing. So tonight, one hour after the Fellowship at 8 p.m. Israel time, you'll be touched, you'll be moved, you'll be inspired, you do not want to miss it.

But I want to share something from the book of Joshua that touches on our subject today. Every time the Bible refers to Rachav, she's called Rachav, the harlot. Every single time. It's like,

I don't refer to Ari as "Ari, the chicken farmer from Judea." He's just known as Ari. It's very rare where something is so fixed to your name in the Bible. It's a unique lesson. Your whole life can be immersed in total darkness to the point that when you're spoken about, you're framed as Rachav, the harlot, in the Bible, every time she's mentioned. And here we see one act saved not only Israel, saved her, her family, and the righteousness redeemed her and it became her legacy, she became a queen. She ultimately married into Israel.

And I don't want to spoil Tehila's class, but there's something beautiful about that. It's her legacy now, she is the paradigm of teshuva, that's why Tehila's teaching about her, because all of us have issues, and in one moment, you can flip it all around. And so that's a deep lesson about teshuva in our lives.

But when teaching us about Amalek, I think there's something really deep that's being revealed to us. We're told that every generation, Amalek takes a new form. And evil is masked and then unleashed into the world. And how do you know who Amalek is? If they have a pure hatred of Israel and want single-mindedly to destroy the Jewish people, you know spiritually they are Amalek. And so, last generation, the Nazis, they had just like an unbridled hatred, a laser focus, they wanted to destroy Israel. Today, the Jihad, Iran, it's so irrational that this little country the size of New Jersey, it's just a manifestation of evil. And we saw evil unleashed on October 7th, and we are continuously able to see the evil of that society as we continue to explore the news dealing with this war.

And so, in the parsha of us waging war, the Torah in these last few verses are giving us the best weapons and the best tools to defeat evil in every generation. How do we defeat Amalek? How do we combat evil? The Torah tells us, "Zachor," remember, do not forget, remember, memory. Memory is different than just learning history. History is "his story." Memory is "our story." One is objective, one is how it affects you. History is about information. Memory is about my identity, it's who I am, it's how the history lives on through me. And if we can remember who we are, where we've come from, what we've gone through, we can learn for the future and know where we're going. History is just raw, objective information. Memory is our identity, it's how it shapes our lives.

So for the most part, if you ask people in Israel about their identity, they'll say, "Oh, I'm Israeli." But that identity, it's less than 80 years old, since 1948. So it's like, your memory, it's got to go a little bit deeper than that. So I would say, "Who are you, then?" Within Israeli, there are Jews from Judea. Once we remember and we live in our memory, that lives out in our lives, there's no room to call Judea the West Bank, and the Jews, settlers in occupied Land. It's Judea, it's our home. It's not that this Land belongs to us, we belong to this Land.

And in the same way, the Germans are from Germany, Chinese are from China, Japanese are from Japan, Mexico – Mexicans, it's just obvious. Jews are from Judea. This Land birthed our identity and our memory of who we are as a people today.

But in truth, we weren't always called Jews. Who are we in the deepest sense, in our core of our memory and identity. We were always called *bnei Yisrael*, the children of Israel. That's the one thing that unites all Jews around the world. It's not a religion, it's not a philosophy, it's not a religion, it has nothing to do with your Torah observance. The one thing that unites every living Jew in the world is that all of us are really descendants, we're all the children of Israel. So within the Israeli, there's a Jew. And within the Jew on a deeper level, we go right back to Israel. But only when we integrate all of these levels of our history in our memory, can we really stand up to evil that's attacking us today.

And so, now, as we approach the end of history as we know it, being a part of the family of Israel is taking on a totally new level. In the history of Israel, it's really the people that are making it their identity, it's making it their memory, choosing to align with the destiny of Israel is to become a part of biblical history. It's to see what's happening in Israel today, not from the news that I just watched yesterday, or even since 1948. It's to see it as a part of a 3,000 year journey.

And because the prophets say a new people will be born in these days, a macro-Israel, a new chosen people, a chosen people that are not just Jews. In Zechariah, chapter 2, verse 15, it says:

And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and shall become My people; and I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.

• Zechariah 2:15

So as all the nations, the countries, are turning against Israel, there will be righteous goyim, that look totally like Germans from Germany, and they're going to rise up from within those nations, attach themselves to Israel, attach themselves to God, and they will become God's

people. How do they do that? It's all about their memory and their identity. Do they see the Bible as living history today? Do they see themselves as a part of the story of Israel? Are they making the choice to align themselves with the destiny of Israel? Because they identify more with Israel than they do with the culture that they see all around them in their own host countries. It's not about religion and it's not about conversion and it's not about theology. People can have different understandings. The question is, is the Bible alive within them, are they seeing Israel's destiny unfolding? And they say, "I want to align myself with that destiny."

So together, the last people in the end of days, it will not just be Jews. It will be the new people that's born in this generation. It'll be a model of King David's army. Half of David's men weren't born Jewish. They were called from the nations and they joined to serve the army of the King of Israel. It wasn't that they were just pro-David. It's not just enough to be pro-Israel. They staked their life on it, they joined the army of Israel. It's not enough to just be pro-Israel. It's a life choice to cast your lot with Israel and align your destiny with the people of Israel. That is how Amalek is ultimately defeated. That's how good will overcome evil. That's how the Bible is able to reign. That's how the Torah will go forth from Zion. The Torah is a living Word, and that's really what we need to be aiming toward, that we sort of step away from religion, we step away from theology, we step away from the things that divide us and we actually attach ourselves to the Living Word of God that lives within us.

And so that is my blessing, that as Israel is at war, all of us say, "You know what? I'm at war, too. I'm at war on the inside. I'm at war with Israel, I stand with Israel, I align with Israel. And then, please God, there will be a Temple that is built in Jerusalem, a House of Prayer for all Nations." And there will be God's people that will reflect what it is to really love, what it is to be different, and yet still be respectful. What it is to be from different nations, different cultures, different languages, and different backgrounds, and different educations and still be united. A brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God. That will be the ultimate defeat of Amalek.

All right my friends, Ari, I hope you take it from here and I'm here to back you up if you need anything.

Ari

Thank you, I appreciate that, Jeremy. That was really beautiful. So many things what you said here really sparked in my mind. One of the things is just this past week, we had a visitor come out to the Farm that I got to spend a good hour and a half with. I don't know if you guys have heard of him. This is his picture. Have you heard of him?



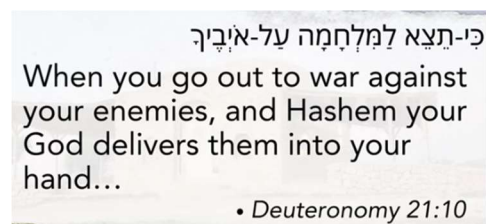
His name is Nate Buzolic? This is him at the Farm? Have you guys heard of him? Raise your hand if you've heard of him before. He's got like millions of followers on like Instagram and Facebook, and he is an, I don't know what titles people go by, or what he identifies as, but I think he's sort of a conventional Christian, but he loves Israel with a passion. And when I say he loves Israel, I don't mean he just like posts things about Israel. I mean he comes to Israel and every opportunity in which Israel is mocked and derided in the media. He rises to the occasion. And because of that, he was a big movie star,

he really was. He's all the way to the Farm, so I just Wikipediad him. I think it's spelled B U Z O L I C for those of you who are looking him up. Anyways, he suffered big time professionally. He's not getting hired. Everybody says, "The Jews run Hollywood," come on. Maybe the far left wing, self-hating, atheists, leftist, Jews have a place in Hollywood of authority. But definitely not Jews who care about Israel at all because he has really suffered.

And he told me, "Yeah, I suffered, I did. But it's a small price to pay." And when Jeremy is saying, quoting Zechariah and saying, "They will attach themselves to the House of Israel." I've always felt that attaching yourself to the House of Israel is exactly during these times when the world is against us, it is a time of tremendous opportunity to cast your lot with Israel and tie your fate in with the fate of the Jewish people. And if it means suffering, if it means professional cost, whatever it means, he seemed to be grateful for all that he has suffered. He's really a very lofty soul. And like, he's not necessarily so Hebrew roots. I really didn't get to get into all of that with him. I just saw in him an authentic love and simplicity and purity of love for God and Israel and it was just a very moving thing. And he's like had to fight his war for that.

And when I was reading through Ardelle's prayer booklet, I'm like, "Wow, this war thing. It's a bug. The war of this world. You know during the Judean diet support session, we're still doing the Judean diet support session. Even though after the first round that was hugely successful and wonderful and transformative, we haven't done any promotion at all. We're about to start something new, we're going to talk about it next week. I'm very excited about it. But we have the Judean Diet support group and we're still doing it. We're still doing the support group.

And last week I was just feeling so out of it today, I was going to go back and listen to the recording of the support session to see the name of who stood up and spoke. Because one of the things that we do, is we connect to the Torah portion to the challenges that we're having in maintaining our physical and spiritual health, our authority over our body that we're the ones in control and make it really our physical dietary journey. We harness it to strengthen our relationship with HaShem. And I forgot who mentioned it, but she started with the words, this Torah portion, it says:



She said, "The Torah could have said, "If you go out to war," but it doesn't say that. It says, "When you go out to war." War is not an occasional interruption of life. It is woven into the very fabric of existence, to be alive is to be born into war.

And I remember learning early on that when our soul is summoned to come into this world, there's no soul that is eager to come down. It's not something that is an exciting prospect, to be thrust into the war of this world because that's what it is. You know on the surface, it refers to Israel's battles for survival, you know that's what you think about. "When you go out to war," that Israel, it's just we're at war, from Amalek to Chamas to the Egyptians to Spain, the Cossacks, the Pogroms. Our nation's history has been written on a battlefield. But to be Jewish, it's not something we opt into. It's thrust upon us.

But the Torah never speaks only of the external. If war is life's starting point, it's because there's a deeper war at play. The war inside. And you could ask Jeremy. We drive to the Israel Guy's recording every week on Thursday. We have a good five hours with each other in the car. And we're going through our challenges, and I keep saying, when I'm strengthening him and he needs strengthening, I'm essentially really strengthening myself also. And I feel like when I spend all of my energy strengthening Jeremy and I'm out and I'm empty, then I like fall on my face and then I go to Jeremy and he strengthens me. And we're like always holding each other up because we're going through a lot lately.

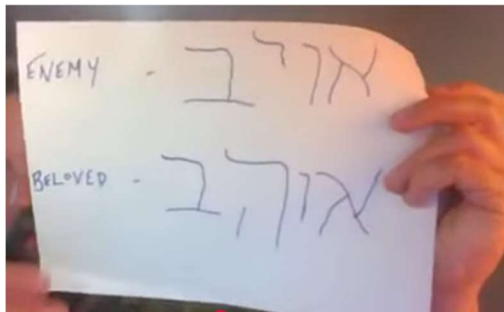
And it's really the war inside. When you focus on that as the ultimate empowerment. I pity people who experience this world as arbitrary, random things that are just happening that you have to fight, and aren't looking with the eyes to see what God is putting before them in order to give them the opportunity to grow exactly in the way that they need to grow. You know our sages teach that the yetzer hara, the evil inclination enters a child at birth. While the yetzer tov, the good inclination only arrives later – bar or bat mitzvah. This means that life begins as a war. And only later do we really gain the weapons to fight it. That's why kids, when a child is bar mitzvahed, the father goes up to the Torah and says, "Blessed is He who has exempted me from the punishment of this young boy," because now he's responsible for himself.

I remember when my father said that for me. He looked so relieved, because it was all on him. Anyways, this is the central drama of existence. You know the soul descends in to a body precisely to engage in this battle, to refine the core elements of ourselves and to elevate the fallen sparks that are hidden within creation. And without this conflict, there would be no growth and no victory and no purpose.

You know we spoke about this, but really when you look at Chamas, one of the things, you know Jeremy and I were working on the miracles of Israel, really chronologically plotting them out, we're so excited about this project. We're so excited about it, it's so exciting to be able to really call out and aggregate these miracles. And when you put them all next to each other and you see them from the beginning of October 7th, because we can look from the beginning of

creation, but just from the beginning of October 7th, we see God's Hand. But we could also see how God is guiding us and we're growing from this. And I believe that we will look back at the final redemption, when all is clear. We say, "Shema Yisrael, HaShem Elocheinu, HaShem echad," Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. We're first saying, at the beginning God of Israel is the God of the nation of Israel. But HaShem echad, it will end with the God of all humanity, there will be one God for all of mankind. And that's what this process is going through. We'll look back and see Chamas, the terrible war that we're fighting right now, as that catalyst, the final fibrillatory that wakes us up as the nation of Israel and brings us to that higher experience.

I was reading, I didn't have a chance to ask Tabitha to make this, so as Jeremy was speaking, I remembered of it, I don't know if you can see. Can you see this? Not really, it's blurred. So I'm going to unblur my background.



It says on the top here, oeyev, which is enemy. And it says, ohev, which is beloved, right? Or friend. And the difference between the two is the letter yud is within oeyev, it's the letter yud, and if you take that letter yud, and you expand it out, and it's almost like the letter yud embodies, symbolizes a hiddenness. And when you expand it out to what is hidden within it, you get

the hey, the ohev. Because when all is clear and the confusion of this world is made apparent by HaShem, we will see that this oeyev, that our enemies, was actually a sign of God's love to us. That it is exactly those oeyvim, these enemies, that brought within us the opportunity.

The Rambam explains that free will is the foundation of all the reward and punishment. And if we only had a pure soul pulling us toward the good, then our choices would be automatic, like angels, right? The yetzer hara introduces resistance, temptations, and distractions, and ego. And that resistance makes our choices real.

So that's the idea the sages say, without the yetzer hara, no one would build a house, marry a woman, have children, engage in commerce. That it's ambition, desire, competitiveness, all of these come from the yetzer hara. But they're not necessarily bad when directed selflessly, when they're directed selfishly, they corrupt. But when they're harnessed and elevated, they are great, they are what makes us human and give us the opportunity to strive for greatness and to pray better.

And it's also, right now, during this time when we're going to meet the King in the field, and we have this beautiful tshuva and we're returning to God, falling to the yetzer hara, to the evil inclination, it teaches us humility and teaches us dependence on God. And without mistakes, there would be no tshuva, no broken heart that God treasures. The Chasidic sages even say that sometimes a descent is caused by the yetzer hara to lead to a higher ascent. For a person reconnects with God with more passion and sincerity than before.

So, we think of it, we think of the yetzer hara as an enemy – the evil inclination, satan, but in truth it's a sparring partner, like a weight in the gym. Its resistance strengthens us and gratitude comes from recognizing that the very obstacles in our path are what allow us to grow into our true selves. David HaMelak says in Tehilim says, "Create in me a pure heart," that not because the yetzer hara should be erased, but because he sought to strengthen, to master it. And that is the greater a person's soul, the greater is that evil inclination. And that means that our struggles are not signs of weakness, but of potential. And the stronger the challenge, the more elevated the victory. I guess we should be thanking HaShem for the greatest challenges that we have from within because it reflects the greatness that HaShem sees within us, that we're worthy of such tests.

And so that's the central drama of existence. The soul descends into a body precisely to engage in this battle – to refine the course and elevate the fallen sparks that are hidden within creation. And without the conflict, there's no victory, there's no growth, there's no purpose. And I really try to remember this because it's so often that you just hate those things that are causing you this pain and this anguish and these challenges. And you want them not to be there and then you have these moments of serenity. And so I try to just remember that those things aren't standing in our way of living a life of serenity. Any serenity we have is just where we're in the corner, like the boxer, like he's in the corner (puffing), and back in. But that is the fight that we're here for.

And the greatest of our forefathers are not those who conquered those who conquered their yetzer hara, their evil inclination, but those who fought it every day and the battle never ends. And that is not failure, it's the mission. And our greatness, I'm even thinking right now, I was thinking King David. He gave in, he had that great sin, and there's a question, was it a sin? Wasn't it a sin? I'm not at the level where I can necessarily see how it wasn't a sin with Bat Sheva. But from that, Messiah came. Our greatness is not measured by whether we're tempted, but by whether we keep choosing to fight with courage and faith.

And that's why I feel like the Judean Diet for me, the 5th module about resilience, I've gone back and watched it a number of times because it really strengthened me. I was learning with it.

And so our Torah portion of Ki Teitzei, it presents us with a string of mitzvot that at first, it seems disconnected. The laws of a captive woman, the rebellious son, building a fence on the roof and the eternal command to blot out Amalek. Yet we learn that this is not a random list of commandments. There's nothing random in the Torah. It's a living blueprint for our inner life and our national life. And when we see them together, they really reveal strategies for triumph in our mission here in the world.

And so, there's the captive woman. I remember that during the war, when I was in my first service, going into Lebanon. And there was a war in Lebanon, that we were accused in Western Universities of racism because there were no accusations, even of rape. That Israeli soldiers didn't rape any of these Arab/Muslim/Lebanese women. And we were racist. Think about the absurdity of that. But it says:

You will see among the captives
a beautiful woman and desire
her...

• Deuteronomy 21:11

And to say that it's never happened, throughout the history of Israel that we went to war, and we know that happens in war. And that there wasn't a temptation, the Torah doesn't deny human desire, it acknowledges it. But it doesn't permit

us to surrender blindly to it. And it definitely doesn't make a virtue out of surrendering to it as we see in our Jihadist adversaries that come in and they worship, they revel in the rape and they take their passions and they make it a virtue.

Why do you think in prisons, Islam, everyone is converting to Islam. Because now just being criminals that are just giving in to whatever disgusting impulses they have, now their disgusting impulses are being harnessed into virtue and a theological imperative. And so, instead of just giving into our passions, it teaches us to refine them. The captive woman, while it's true on like a denotative level, like it's actually a real true commandment, there's actually deeper meanings and dimensions within it, and it represents the raw, drives within us. Desire and ambition and appetite. And these drives can enslave us if they're not checked.

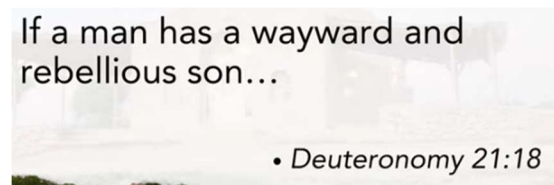
But when disciplined and sanctified and harnessed, they become engines of creativity and love and holiness. I really was thinking, the Judean Diet, I keep going back to that, I keep going into my mind because it's such a part of my consciousness and what I've been going through and every week we talk about it. But really, it was only when I stopped spending years trying to do Atkins, or total keto, or entire food categories, I just wouldn't touch them. But I never actually did it because...this is my last slice of pizza and then I'm going to be keto for the rest of my life. Do you know how many consecutive days of the last slice of pizza that I had? And now it's like, no, we create our fences, we put the fence around our roof, we say, we eat between these

hours. And you can eat these things in moderation, you can feed the beast instead of just totally denying it. That total denial, we see that in the Catholic church and what is the stereotype of some of the priests there? I'm not trying to paint them as evil and bad, but it's the result of trying to contend with desires and passions by totally negating them, that is just not what we're here in this world for.

And so the sages say that the evil inclination is very good because without it, we wouldn't have these ambitions that cause us to go and to marry and to build and to create. So the lesson – don't kill your passion, channel it. Direct it toward family and toward Torah and to building God's world.

I was also thinking of sometimes I go to synagogue and there's someone making a lot of noise and talking and bickering, and I want to turn to them and go, "Shhhh." And of course, I think like, well the guy that does that, you always look at him when he's the one talking, and he was just shushing and now he's talking. But also, I try to say to myself, "Ok, I just be redoubling my effort into God's Word and into focusing pouring my heart out to pray to Him and not thinking about them." Just channeling it.

And then there's the rebellious son.



If a man has a wayward or rebellious son. It's a very interesting, entire idea, this idea of the rebellious son. That is, gluttonizing himself, and wine and alcohol, and all these things at a young age and eventually, he's supposed to be put to death. Why?

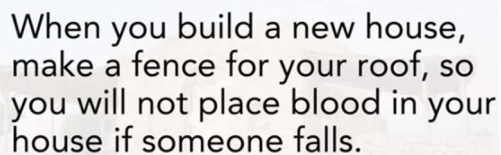
Because of what he's going to become. Now our sages say that that's never actually happened. So why are we learning about it? Because there's certain ideas within it.

The Torah describes this wild child whose rebellion spirals out of control and the rabbis famously say that it's here to teach us, like I said. And what's the lesson? That rebellion ignored festers into destruction. But rebellion guided can become greatness. Avraham, Abraham was a rebel. He was a rebel, he truly was, against idolatry. The whole world, his own father took him to King Nimrod to have him executed, but he was a rebel. Moshe was a rebel against Pharaoh. Rabbi Akiva was a rebel against Rome. The same fiery spirit that resists authority can when shaped, resist injustice and falsehood.

I'm even thinking about a family that came out here to the Farm, maybe 2 ½ years ago, and I lay it on thick about my love for Israel, that I think every Jew should live here. And some families

actually take to it. And this family within that week, went to Shabbat, they decided to stay here. And their son in America, he was like really Goth, you know what Goth is? Like black, wearing black robes, black earrings, and then he came here and he became a hilltop youth. And now he studies Torah and he's composing Psalms, he's like so holy. And it just needed to be...you take that rebellious spirit and the way it manifests in the exile, and you bring him to the hills of Judea, it's a beautiful thing.

And so, parents and teachers and leaders, our task is not to crush rebellion, but to sanctify it and to channel youthful fire towards the service of HaShem. And there's a lot more. There's the fence on the roof.

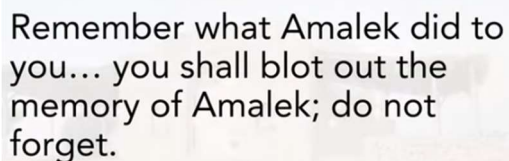


When you build a new house, make a fence for your roof, so you will not place blood in your house if someone falls.

• Deuteronomy 22:8

But we talked about that last year. About how the faller falls, meaning that there's a certain destiny, you don't want it to be you. But you can listen to last year's Fellowship for that. But bottom line, the mitzvah's about responsibility. Don't wait until disaster strikes. Anticipate danger and prevent it. You build a fence before someone climbs the roof. Safeguard lives before the tragedy arrives.

And our souls, too, have rooftops, right? Like lofty places of inspiration and ascent. But the higher we climb, I think we've all seen this and experienced it, the greater we fall, if we're careless. Torah demands that we build safeguards, that's what it's about. Our habits of prayer, community, accountability, actions, rituals, community, to keep our inspiration grounded. Victory in life requires not only soaring to the heights, but just security. Securing ourselves, making sure we're grounded. And like Jeremy said, there's Amalek.



Remember what Amalek did to you... you shall blot out the memory of Amalek; do not forget.

• Deuteronomy 25:17-19

The Torah reminds us that not every force can be transformed. Amalek represents a pure evil, a force of doubt and cruelty and chaos. And with Amalek, there's no dialogue, there's no compromise, I think that's why every Jew in Israel that's anything rooted

in clarity, just when we see our government having dialogue with Chamas, it's like....what are we doing? You don't have dialogue with that level of evil. Evil needs to be confronted head on and defeated.

And also, in our personal lives. Amalek appears as cynicism and despair and voices that mock our faith and our mission and make us feel small and irrelevant. You know I was just talking to a friend of mine that sometimes I picture myself. They say that when Aaron saw Moses he had

happiness in his heart and if he knew that the Torah was saying that, he would have greeted Moses with timbrels, right? If we only knew, each and every single one of us in this Fellowship, if we only knew, that these inner conflicts, these inner challenges that we have that are seducing us. These passions that are pulling us this way or that way. Or the cynicism or the doubt. That when we overcome that, there is an entire realm of spiritual forces and beings and angels that are exploding with joy of the light of the sanctification of God's Name here in the lowest realm that we're releasing through that. We would be rocking it even more than we may be even right now.

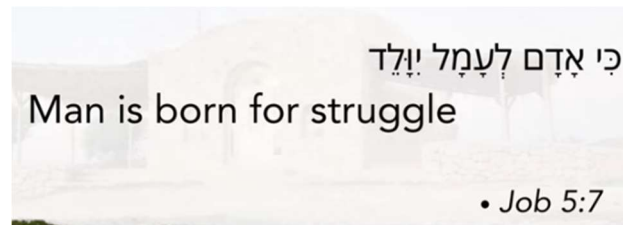
You know nationally, Amalek takes the form of those who seek the destruction of Israel. And so, the only response is to fight for what Israel is about – courage, clarity, confrontation, faith. And faith. So anyways, we weren't born to drift through history, we were not born to be slaves to our passions or crushed by rebellion or blind sighted by tragedy. We're not born to cower before Amalek, we're born for this. We're born for the struggle, that's what Yisrael means, to struggle, to wrestle with God and to prevail. We were born for the struggle, for the discipline, for the growth, for the mission.

I hope it's ok, I was just thinking about Jessica and her son, Levi and the challenges that she's had. I think about her a lot, we pray for her a lot, we pray for everybody, but just the faith and the optimism and the happiness and the love for life that I see in her life and in her heart. It just gives me such strength. And here I am in the hills of Judea, surrounded by these Jihadists and Jessica in America, who could feel like, "Oh, what a little struggle," but she doesn't know the light that is exploding to the world through her.

You know, HaShem gives us tools, gives us passion to build, rebellion to resist falsehood. So many of you reach out and talk about your churches and someone was just telling me that they were thrust out of their church where they were working as like pastors in the church, but they didn't want to participate in the Easter egg hunt with the helicopters, they rebelled against it. And they were thrown out. And it led them on this journey. You know rebellion isn't a bad thing. When it's harnessed it's a beautiful thing when it's harnessed correctly.

Vigilance to prevent collapse. Courage to confront evil. Every mitzvah is a weapon and a shield and a strategy. When we embrace them, we're no longer wondering souls. We become soldiers of light and when we fight with the Torah's wisdom, victory is not only possible, but it's inevitable. And why do I say it's inevitable? But you may say, "I know that I failed." Jeremy and I just had this discussion. I fail, I know that I've failed. How do you know that you failed? You don't know that you've failed. You falling flat on your face may have been the very best case outcome of the challenge that HaShem put before you and you fell on your face and you

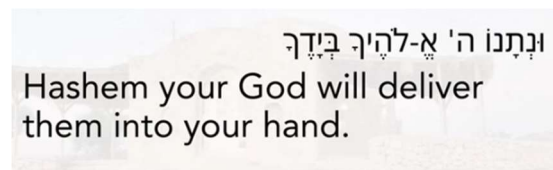
passed. HaShem knows your heart and you fought with everything that you had. You just don't know, you just don't know. The verse in Job says:



elevate them into tools of holiness.”

The Vilna Gaon explains, “Man is born for milchamah, for war. To imagine that life’s goal is comfort or for ease is to miss the point totally. We’re here to fight, to fight our fears and our appetites and our despair and to

And that’s empowering. The Torah assures us:



We are not sent to war alone. HaShem promises us that if we step forward with courage, He will fight with us and for us and through us. And our sages teach that our enemies, both internal and external

are ultimately sparks of Divine light that are concealed in a mask of opposition. And when we fight, we don’t only destroy, we transform. And every victory releases hidden holiness into the world.

I’m just being honest. When we’re going to war in Gaza and we’re fighting Chamas, when you listen to their videos from when they’re little kids. What do they want from their children? From their youth? For their whole life to be shahids, to be martyrs. I always say, who are we to deny them that? Who are we to deny them that? That really, to wipe out Chamas, this soldier, this Chamas terrorist, we all heard that audio recording where he said to his parents, he’s killed ten Jews with his own bare hands and they were so proud. He was just killed. We just took him from the world and to act like we’re not happy about that. We should be happy about that because that releases light and he, himself would be grateful for not being here.

Rav Kook says:

“The foundation of life is the battle. It’s precisely through the clash of forces that the soul expands and deepens and grows strong.”

This means that every craving resisted, every anger that’s overcome, every act of kindness that is chosen in the face of apathy, they’re not small victories, they are eternal conquests. They’re the very reasons our soul came into the world.

So we weren't born into peace. We're born into war, that's why we were born. And these obstacles aren't punishments, and these challenges aren't accidents. It's a battlefield that is assigned to your soul. Our challenges are assigned to our soul and orchestrated perfectly for us. And every temptation is not a sign of weakness. It's proof that we're alive and that we're still in the fight. And that's the promise. When you go out to war, HaShem Your God will deliver them into your hand. It's not a maybe and it's not wishful thinking, this is the Divine guarantee. If we fight, not with despair, but with faith and with joy, victory is certain. Victory is certain.

We don't necessarily know how that's going to look, but victory is certain. And so this week's Torah portion, this period of time that we're in is not a warning of despair, but it's a call to courage. Life is a war, we're born into it. And when we embrace the fight, every day becomes a victory. And when we fall, we rise again. For as long as we're alive, the war isn't lost, if we're still breathing, the war is not lost and HaShem is with us on the battlefield.

And so with that, before we open up to the Fellowship Connection, as we close, let us take this truth with us. That life is not a detour around the battlefield, but the very arena where HaShem reveals His glory through us. And I bless us that we should be able to refine our passions and every spark that is lifted and every challenge that is faced with faith becomes another victory in HaShem's Name and I bless us that those should all happen through us. May HaShem bless each and every one of us to stand strong in the wars that we're called to fight, whether in body or in spirit or in the world around us. May He give us courage to confront evil without fear, wisdom to channel our fire toward holiness, and vigilance to guard against the hidden pitfalls all around us, and joy in knowing that we are never alone in the fight. And may our struggles be transformed into songs of triumph, and our tears be transformed into wellsprings of blessings, and our daily battles into victories. And may the day come swiftly when all the wars within and without are silenced and peace flows forth from Zion to the ends of the earth. And with that, allow me to bless you the blessing of Aaron the High Priest. And as you all know, I'm not a descendant of Aaron, but we are a mamleket kohanim v'goy kadosh, we are a nation of priests and a holy nation. And in that capacity, it is my greatest joy to bless all of you with just some of the sparks of light with which you bless us. It is my great joy to bless all of you.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

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

