

Session 61  
Ki Tavo – Crowning the King of the Universe – Rosh Hashana  
29 August 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y52g9XU0QmE>

Jeremy

Hey everybody! It's great to see you, shalom fellowship! I hope everything is going well. I hope you are doing well. Do you guys get as excited as I do about the chats? Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, Germany, Africa, Israel, Canada, London, Croatia, Idaho...from Croatia to Idaho. I mean, what's going on here? That's a miracle. That's what it is. It's just an amazing, amazing, thing. It's Sunday, it's a new week. We're on our way to a new year. I feel like our first year, last year, we were practicing. And now we're like diving into this year together. It's for real.

And I just want to let you know what's going on in the Gimpel family really quick. My oldest daughter, Eden, she is 11, just came back positive for Covid. She didn't feel very good for a couple of days, nothing too serious, headache and a fever. We got her tested in order that she wouldn't be able to spread it over everyone. But over Shabbat, she lost her sense of smell. But she's feeling much better now, so Baruch HaShem, thank God she's doing good. It's just been a little bit chaotic, kind of putting her in her room and separating everyone and school's about to start and what does that mean. You know, whatever happens, you know sometimes we forget. And sometimes we need to be reminded. Never take anything for granted. Every day with our loved ones is a gift. Rosh Hashanah is called Yom HaZikaron, the day of remembering, the day of memory. We need to be reminded every so often about so many things. I know a lot of people are focused on what they want. But sometimes it's important to remember what we already have and how blessed we already are.

And you know, the sages of Israel say that in prayer, when you pray with tears, it opens up the gates to heaven. But when you pray out of gratitude, it removes the gates altogether. And so, just let's take this time to remember how fortunate we are and we're together. And to be able to dedicate this time to learning to preparing, to growing, to carving out our own path toward a life of blessing and to bring so many people from so many places all around the world at the same time in prayer is such a unique opportunity that only our generation and as far as I know, maybe only our fellowship. I just don't know anything like this in Israel. It's so special. And so, let's just dedicate this time with one heart, with one Land, with one God, HaShem, King of the Universe.

Thank you, for this day. Thank you for gathering us together to start off our week together, to start off our year together crowning you as King in our Life. We kneel before you and we kneel before nothing else. Your good is our aim and Your will is our desire. May the sound of the shofar straighten out our hearts, wake us up and call us to duty. We come here every Sunday because we are waiting on Your calling and preparing for the time when we are needed most. Bless us this Elul. Take us away from fear and constraints and bless us with a time of growth

and expansion and hope. Guide us and our loved ones on Your path and protect us. Protect us with Your light. Bless every family in this fellowship and their loved ones. Help them flourish this year into the people You created us all to be. Amen.

So, just before we start this session, which is going to be dedicated to preparing for Rosh Hashanah – the New Year, Yom Teruah – the Day of the Shofar Blast, Yom HaZikaron – the Day of Remembrance, Yom HaDin – the Day of Judgment. This holiday has so many names. It might have more names than any other holiday. It's like such a deep holiday. Like each name reveals another layer, another dimension to the day. But before we go deep into Rosh Hashanah, I want to invite Ari Abramowitz to share some Torah with us, direct from the parsha, because the parsha is our constant guide every week. It's our anchor. And I was alone on the mountain this Shabbat, so I didn't have a chance to learn with Ari. So, I'm really curious as to what he learned and what he's going to teach us today to help us get prepared for the great days ahead. So, Ari, take it away.

Ari

Shalom my friends! Shalom, shalom. Can you hear me? Great, great. Thank you, Jeremy. Good to see you, good to see all of you as always. I'm looking through the faces and looking at the chats and I'm just as excited as Jeremy. It puts me in the best place to see all of you and to be together. It's just good to be together again. And thank you before I start off, for sharing with me throughout the week. I was happy to hear that you all felt as blessed about our prayer session last week as I did. And I encourage you to keep the prayers coming. Keep them coming, send them to me either by email or WhatsApp. I forward them all immediately to the group I have with Jeremy. Just me and Jeremy. Just the two of us. So he's able to pray immediately right then. And so not only will I continue to pray for you right there on the spot, but God-willing we will pray together again in our next prayer session, next week at the end of the fellowship. I've heard some of your ideas about how to move around with this prayer session and make it even better and I'm excited to implement that. I don't know if we'll do it this coming week or the time afterwards. But anyway, I'm excited about that and I feel that it's a holy and blessed undertaking.

So, as you will hear from Jeremy, HaShem has been shaking up our mountain out here on the Judean frontier. You'll hear about one of the big, great developments from Jeremy. I don't want to ruin it for him, although I did have an evil inclination to do so. But I'm not going to do it. But I wanted to share with you about a yeshiva that came out to the farm this past Wednesday. And this was the second year that this yeshiva came out to the farm. And their rabbi told me that after the trip here, that the students were so profoundly impacted by their time at the farm that there was nothing like it. He told me that three of them cancelled their trips back to America and signed up to get drafted in the Israeli army and make their lives here in Israel.

You know I've heard this before, I've experienced it before, more times that I can tell you. And I have to tell you every time I hear even one, I really have a voice in my head that I could die

now. That type of impact on the Jewish people in the world, even just one is enough for me. And I know Jeremy feels the same. We've had these experiences together and it's so fulfilling.

And so they said that they wanted to stay here, these students and it was their time at the farm. They told them directly that's why they decided to make that move. You know Jeremy and I have been on our mission together to spread the truth of Israel with the world. Meaning the meaning of Israel, the purpose, the joy, the vitality of life in Israel. We've been on this mission now for nearly 20 years, how ever crazy that is, Jeremy. It's been nearly 20 years. I never thought I would be a guy that could even say that. And listen, there's no where we wouldn't go, there's no one we wouldn't speak to. Hot hotel rooms in the 15<sup>th</sup> floor of the Kings Hotel, wherever it was, we went there, we would do it. There's no where we wouldn't go. And I really feel in retrospect, that we were truly faithful to our mission, even if it didn't often feel like we knew where it was all going. And I could not say that about many other parts of my life. That I've been really faithful and true in every single way. I think Jeremy possibly can, but not this guy. But anyway, I try. I'm not trying to knock myself, I'm just saying that that stood out. It was like a religious conviction, like I've told you, when I'm called and they say there's nine guys that are praying and they need a tenth. Literally it doesn't matter what I'm doing, I'm going to go there and to do that.

Anyways, I feel like when HaShem sent us out to this mountain, I felt like He was saying, "Ok, you two. You've proven your dedication and your loyalty and now I'm going to switch out your slingshot for a nuclear weapon, a nuclear weapon of holiness that is." That the impact of our message through the vessel of this holy mountain that I'm sitting at right now, and thank you HaShem that the internet is strong enough. You can apparently all hear me. The impact through the vessel of this mountain is so powerful that it's difficult to describe in words. And that's why often I feel like I shouldn't even try. You just have to experience it for yourself.

So this Yeshiva of American students were spending their gap year in Israel. The gap year is the year between High School ending and college beginning. And they came out to the farm this past Wednesday. And as with so many of the groups, as the bus was pulling up, I whisper the prayer, "HaShem please open my lips and allow my mouth to express Your praises." And then we begin our journey together and I just let the words flow. And you know, sometimes some of the words are the same as they are on other tours as you can imagine when you're giving a tour. But it feels new each time. And I express them with a new zeal each time because even if some of the words are the same, they're being expressed to completely different people at a different time, in a different situation and it makes it a whole different experience.

Anyways, back to this past Wednesday. I saw in the eyes of these students when they were out here that they were just like alive. They were lit up. And I saw maybe one or two of these smart phones come out which is pretty rare. That's exceptional. You know how it is with people. Not only adults, but kids that are raised with these smart phones. There's one moment of down time, one moment of their mind wandering, of being bored and they've got it right in front of them.

Anyways, we went to the overlook to see the caves where David hit from Saul and where he composed the Psalms, the Tehillim. We saw vineyards upon which Amos prophesied. We went to the House of Prayer and we prayed. And we talked to HaShem. And we went to the Oasis Ecological Pool where I taught them about how this unique and unparalleled manifestation of the words of Isaiah were coming to life right here in our pool as opposed to anywhere else in Israel. It's the greatest manifestation of this prophecy. If you don't know what I'm talking about, you're a new member to the fellowship, I'm sure we'll share it again soon, if not when you come here.

But anyways, we sat down before their final experiential class in hitbadadut. You know, hitbadadut, just how to talk to HaShem, and I opened up with them. And I told them my honest thoughts about the direction America is heading in now from the deepest place. That I feel strongly that there's no future for Jews in America. A lot of my friends, even Jeremy, sometimes says that I should really try to tone it back. And I understand where you're coming from. But I'm not just talking about the rampant assimilation of how American Jews are losing their children in droves to the toxic poison being taught on college campuses that they're paying for. But how I really believe that in the years to come the American Jews will be increasingly at risk physically. I mean their physical safety. That America is clearly an empire in decline. And when things go bad for a country as a whole, they go twice as bad for the Jews. Now, I'm always conflicted about whether to go there, because on some level I feel like it's beneath the dignity of the Holy Land for people to run here out of fear. But rather they should run here out of love and desire. But rarely can I overcome the impulse to also, at the very end, at least in some way, share about the warning. Because in my mind, it's just so real and so impending that I wouldn't be able to forgive myself if I didn't.

Ultimately, I concluded my plea by referencing one of the last verses in this week's Torah portion in which Moshe Rabbenu, Moses, he's detailing the journey that led the nation of Israel to this moment. And he details their very first battle. We've talked about this before. Who did they fight in their very first battle? They fought against the people of Cheshbon, which means in Hebrew, calculations. Cheshbon is calculations. That was the name of the nation. Sichon, the king of Cheshbon. And our sages say that the lesson here is that when it comes to entering the Land of Israel, when it comes to meriting to live in the Land, the first thing you need to conquer is calculations. Because I've been told that when it comes to moving to Israel versus staying in the comfortable, affluent fleshpots of America, if you start making the pros and the cons list, the battle is already over. You need to defeat the calculations. You need to say I'm doing this because it's right and because it's true and because God is with me. Like Joshua said to Caleb, like Joshua and Caleb said to the nation. Right? They didn't start by addressing all of the points that the other spies made, and refuting them and debating them. They simply said, "We can do it. We can do it because we can do it." And that's it.

Now the reason I say I've been told it's a losing battle is because when I make the pros and the cons list, it still comes out far in favor of Israel. But I think maybe I'm a little bit off the deep

end. And when you're seeing things from the perspective of the exile, your comfort zone, your career, your family, your life, you know it's just not an easy move.

So I told these young yeshiva students that they are at a fork in the road on their journeys. And now, this is the time to do it. This is the time to pull the trigger that their great grandchildren will look back at their family tree and point to them and say, "this person right here, my great, great grandfather, Yonatan Rosenberg, or whatever your name is, that is where the exile ended. And they were the one who made the courageous move and planted my family's roots in the Holy Land.

But then an interesting thing happened. One of the rabbis that was on this tour, that was lit up, I mean he's a beloved friend of mine who I both like and respect, he came over to me and he said that he thinks I may have been mistaken. That while he agrees with what I said in principle, that in reality, it may have been misleading. That many people do take the plunge and make aliyah and it isn't a flaming success. That they struggle seriously, like seriously struggle. They struggle with the language and the culture, even just putting food on the table. That I'm making it seem too rosy and too easy. I don't know if you can hear my dog, he's going nuts outside, you have to forgive me. But that's the hashtag, farmlifesecuritymeasures. But anyways, he said I was making things too easy.

So, I was reflecting on his words over Shabbat and I really thought about it, particularly when reading the Torah portion. And it's interesting. Because Rabbi Sacks points out that the blessings and the curses in this week's Torah portion are repeated twice. Once in the portion of Bechukotai in the book of Vayikra, in Leviticus, and once in this week's Torah portion of Devarim, in Deuteronomy. And while they're similar, the reason given for the curses is very different. In Leviticus, God says the curses will transpire if the nation rejects His decree and abhors His laws. Meaning that they actively rebel against Him. In Deuteronomy, it says that the curses will happen because you do not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness in the midst of all of your abundance. So those are two different things. Rebellion and the other one is you didn't serve God with joy and gladness in the midst of the abundance.

So Rabbi Sacks points out that the greatest challenge we have is success, is comfort, is abundance, and that's when I realized that one of the great flaws in the faith of many people out there is the following. Because I'll tell you, my friend wasn't the first one who said this point to me. I've heard it many times. So where is the flaw? I think that many of the American Jews I meet, religious God-fearing Jews...I always wondered why they don't make aliyah when it's a central directive in the Torah and it's so foundational of what it is to be a Jew. We've been praying for it for thousands of years and now we can do it and they're not doing it! And I think that at least one perspective is that they do believe in God, but they don't necessarily believe that God is good. They think that they will make aliyah and they'll suffer. That it may be painful. And that would be a bad thing. And it's true. Many people make aliyah and they suffer. Real suffering – finances, family, culture, there are endless potential downfalls.

But if you truly believe HaShem, and you believe HaShem is good, well then that suffering isn't a bad thing. It's a good thing. We may not be able to understand it right now at this moment, but the suffering is a good thing. As a matter of fact, the sages tell us that there are three things that you acquire through suffering. And one of them is the Land of Israel. That you're actually acquiring your portion of the Land through suffering.

But our Torah portion this week takes it even further. It tells us that one of the greatest causes of spiritual downfall, one of the greatest barriers between us and HaShem is comfort. From the comforts of the exile, Rabbi Sacks pointed out that the greatest place for downfall isn't challenges or pain or difficulty or adversity, it's affluence, it's decadence, and it's comfort. Alright, my friends, I'm going too far here, I'm going too long and I don't know if you can hear me over my dog going nuts right now. But when I say this message, I'm speaking more to myself than I am to you. When I say that we're not in this world to be comfortable. We're put in this world to transcend our comfort zone. To voluntarily and willingly do God's will. To come close to Him. To try to serve Him.

HaShem, please bless all of us. My friends here, me, my family, all of us in this fellowship during these valuable days leading up to Rosh Hashanah. To find the comforts which are preventing us from truly serving you with our whole hearts. We should merit the strength to voluntarily sacrifice these comforts on the altar of our own hearts and our own lives. And by doing so, may we merit to bring the blessings of this Torah portion to rain down on ourselves and our families, on Israel, and on the entire world.

I love you all so much. Many blessings to all of you from our mountaintop here in Judea. Shalom, shalom.

Jeremy

Thank you, Ari. I love that. I really agree with that. I think that kind of a comfort, it's blocking, killing the king of calculations. It's not about calculations. It's about having a listening heart. And I think that that speaks deeply to the work that we're all trying to do on Rosh Hashanah. But before we get to that, back by popular demand, Tehila Gimpel has some Torah for all of us. You know Tehila is my chavruta. She's my study partner. I learn so much from her. And I'm just so grateful that she carves out time each week for our fellowship. And with Eden catching corona, it's just been a bit hectic with our other kids. But as always, she's just a beacon of light and we need light in these times. So, here is Tehila for us.

Tehila

Hey guys, I hope you're all well. We've been busy as usual. I received a bunch of emails, especially about the women's session. I haven't yet gotten to answer them because Eden caught covid and Akiva just started a High School Torah Academy, so we've had our hands full juggling everything, but I promise to try to get back to everyone as soon as I can.

Another thing that's happened recently and I'm sure you guys know. There was a terrible forest fire. It started in the Jerusalem Forest, seemingly looks like by terrorists. It burned down like unimaginably huge amounts of nature in the outskirts of Jerusalem. And along with all that damage, my good friends, Shoshanna and Micha Harrari had their entire harp gallery destroyed. Literally, their entire life's work. They've dedicated their lives as Levites to building the most incredible hand-made Biblical harps following the exact Talmudic instructions and descriptions to make the perfect instruments to serve in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Temple. I met Shoshanna back in 1999. She basically treated me as a daughter. I spent so much time with her. I was privileged to work in the gallery with her. So much of everything that I am I owe to Shoshanna. She taught me about healthy eating, natural healing. She introduced me to for the first time in my life to righteous people among the nations who used to come into the gallery. I didn't even know there was such a thing. I didn't know what that was about. And that really was a big thing for me on my journey. And the fact that we even had our hearts open to establishing an organic farm was totally her influence. So the Harrari's are the real thing. They have dedicated their lives toward redemption and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Temple and all of that was lost in the fire. They weren't even able to get insurance because they lived near a forest and there have been so many terrorist fires in the past couple of years that no one wants to insure a factory making things out of wood near a forest. How crazy is that?! That in Israel you can't build Biblical harps, you can't even get insurance because there is so much terrorist arson. It's crazy, but anyway, helping them is a huge mitzvah. We're going to try to help them as much as we can and hopefully, we'll send out a link to the funding page that people have opened for them. So if anyone has any extra tithes, wants to do a mitzvah, they're truly a worthy cause to help.

So this week's Torah portion. This week's Torah portion, it's a little scary. Those curses are long and it's interesting that the curses are longer than the blessings. There's something so true about that. Just that alone, like when things are going well, ok, things are going well. You're happy. It's like, "I'm happy. That's great." You can kind of max out on how good things can be, right? Like everything is going really well. It's going well, right? But when it comes to messing things up in life, like there's really no limit to how bad things can get. No matter how bad things are, it really can always get worse.

I'm sure you've all been in situations where you're thinking to yourself, "This is really bad." And then something else happens and you're like, "Oh, I thought it was tough yesterday but look at that, it got even worse." I can say this as a divorce lawyer, there's really no end. There's no limit to how messed up things can get. I'm sure you guys all know Tolstoy's famous line that all happy families are alike and each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. It's just so evident through this portion.

Some religious views are like, oh, just love God. Everything will be fine and prosperous. And that's super important. That's here in the portion. But the flip side is you also have to have awe of God, fear of God. Be careful, because the things that you do matter. If you try to jiggle things around your own way and you don't follow the path, the straight path, the commandments, watch out. Those curses are scary. And there are a lot more of them than the blessings.

So I'm reading the curses and when you read them, I'm thinking, "I don't want that to happen to me, that's pretty bad." And so, how do you not have that happen? Right? So, in chapter 28, verses 45-47, we start getting an explanation. This is what will cause you to get the curses. And it says – These curses will befall you and destroy you because you did not obey the Lord your God to observe His commandments and statutes which He commanded you. Fair enough. And then it will be as a sign and a wonder upon you and your offspring forever because you did not serve the Lord your God with happiness and with gladness of heart when you had an abundance of everything.

Now, doesn't that sound a little bit like a contradictory explanation for why we're getting the curses? In verse 45 it sounds like you didn't follow the commandments, so you're going to be cursed. Fair enough. You didn't do the Torah, you get punished. Could have been left at that. But then, verse 47 rolls in. And that seems to be bringing a different explanation. It says, because you did not serve the Lord with happiness and gladness of heart. Now that verse can be understood in a lot of ways and the interpreters have brought many amazing and important interpretations. But on its face, it would just seem to me that you were doing the commandments. You were worshipping HaShem, but you did it without gladness. Why is that obvious? Because if you weren't following the commandments, then 45 would be enough. It says, you didn't follow the commandments, you get punished. Right? The least of HaShem's worries, if you were already not following the commandments would be your lack of gladness, right? HaShem's not going to worry about teaching you the proper emotional internal disposition while you're sinning. Just don't sin.

The proper disposition is what you're supposed to be thinking and feeling internally when you're doing the good things. So it seems like two opposite explanations. Are the curses coming to you for not following the commandments or is it that you followed the commandments? You went to the synagogue, you kept Shabbat, you said the blessings, you said the prayers, but you didn't accompany it with the appropriate emotional feeling, with the appropriate gladness. Which one is it?

The first one seems to intuitively be more appropriate and make sense, doesn't it? Because otherwise it would be a little bit harsh. But there are commandments that are hard. We had this morning, we had a Bedouin Arab in our garden today. And he looked at one of our fruit trees and it was just packed with beautiful fruits. And he said, "Why aren't you picking and eating them?" And I said to him, "Well we planted them only 2 ½ years ago. We can't eat from them until the 4<sup>th</sup> year. The Bible says not to eat the fruits in the first three years."

And he said, "You just leave the fruits there? You do that for Allah?"

I was like, "Well I guess you could say that." That's fair enough, right? And, it's not so hard to not eat those fruits because I could just go buy other fruits in the supermarket, but it's kind of hard. And imagine how hard it was in the time when you didn't have supermarkets, in the Biblical time. That was hard. It's not obviously easy to be happy when you're doing that. You



might be sad to see those fruit go to waste. But would you deserve all those curses, though? Would you be deserving of all those horrible things happening to you?

Like I asked my kids a question a couple of weeks ago. As you guys know, we were traveling in the States. And there were some snacks that we weren't quite accustomed to in like the gas stations and the convenience markets. Our favorite one was fried pork fat. And it would say on the side, like on this little star, "with the skin attached." Like fried pig fat, that's nice, but with the skin attached, that's a real selling point. Now that's not a snack that you'd see every day in Israel. The kids were like, "Gross." Right? But I said to them, "What's a higher level? Someone who's grossed out by the thought of eating fried pig fat with the skin attached? Because he's aligned with HaShem's will, he's not even attracted to that, he's not drawn to that, and then he doesn't eat it? Or someone who actually that looks delicious to them. Maybe they were raised eating that and they really want to eat it, but they hold back. And even if it's hard for them, if they're sad, they said, 'HaShem doesn't allow that, I'm so sad, it's so hard. But I'm not going to do it.'"

And all the kids were unanimous. They said the guy who wants to eat it, but doesn't eat it. He's on a higher level. So that's like the simple intuition that even children have. But, the main thing is to follow the commandments. If you do it happily, great, but even if it's really hard and you're really unhappy. Cool. Good. You're working on yourself. You're trying to get better. You don't deserve curses.

So, it's a little bit hard to understand this verse 47. It touches on this ongoing argument that Jeremy and I have. He thinks that things should be fun and easy. I come from a school of thought that says if you're not suffering, you haven't really done the commandments yet. Like when I was growing up, if you're cleaning for Pesach, for Passover and you haven't had a nervous breakdown yet, are you sure your house is clean? The way Jeremy does things, it's totally different. He makes things fun. Every year when he cleans the floors for Passover, he throws a bunch of soapy water down the hallway. The kids have this like indoor slip and slide. They put on bathing suits. They're sliding down trying to break their necks.

So, in our argument, I'm kind of like, verse 45, the main thing – do the commandments. You don't do the commandments, the curses are going to come on to you. Jeremy's a little more like verse 47. He says the main thing is to worship HaShem with joy. If you don't have the joy, you haven't really done it properly. So, when reading the verses this year, even though I've read them a million times, this new understanding popped out at me, tell me what you guys think. Maybe verse 45 **IS** the explanation of why you get the curses. But verse 47 explains why verse 45 happens, meaning, yes, it's very harsh to bring down curses for someone not being joyous enough. So the curses are for the people who are in the verse 45 category.



Hey buddy, coming in to learn Torah with me? This is Noam. The curses....want to say, “hi? You’re bored? You have to wait one minute until I’m finished, ok buddy?”

So...if you’re 45, you abandon all of the commandments, right? But why would you abandon all of the commandments? Forty-five you abandon the commandments, you get the curses. But why would you even do that? Maybe that’s why we have 47. Forty-seven says how do you get to a situation where you want to abandon all of the commandments? Jeremy’s probably smiling now because this is giving him ammo in our argument. But what it seems to be saying to me is that the curses are for those who abandon the commandments. People abandon the commandments because they were doing the commandments without a joyful heart. Sometimes joy seems to be like a luxury, right? Sometimes at the end of the day I look at Jeremy, he’s pretty relaxed, he’s in a good mood, he’s on the couch. Lord knows he does a lot. He manages the farm, and the fellowship and a million other projects here and there. And at the end of the day, I kind of look and feel like a tattered rag doll. That’s how I feel like. I push myself to the limit, to the breaking point and I’m crashing into my bed. So you can do that.

But maybe the Torah’s teaching you that you can only do that for so long. If you do the commandments without a joyful heart, you’re doing them but is it sustainable? Are you going to be consistent if you don’t have a happy heart? And if you do think it’s sustainable for you, you can say, “I don’t care, I’m going to drudge through the commandments. I’ll do them.” Is it going to speak to your children? Is that going to speak to you, Noam? I don’t think it’s going to speak to you, right? Are they going to want to do it? Are our children going to want to do something that doesn’t look joyful? So maybe it’s teaching us that there’s a chain reaction to expect when we allow the joy element to slip away.

This is really powerful for me because we’re in Elul, planning how we want to be next year. And I sometimes mistakenly have this tendency. I bet some of you ladies can relate to this. To wear hardships like a badge of honor. It’s Friday afternoon and I’m getting ready for Shabbat and I say to Jeremy, “Oh, I’ve been on my feet all day and the kids have been nagging me and my clothes are all smudged up.” Like HaShem is going to give me some sort of trophy for having killed myself to make Shabbat. What are the verses teaching us? That’s not the only way to do things. Maybe that’s not going to last. Maybe that’s not going to be sustainable over generations.

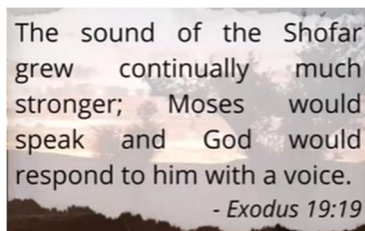
So maybe this Elul, not just a time to think of new commandments that I want to take upon myself, but to plan out how can I take the things that I'm already doing and add a little extra spice of joy. So I can look forward to them. And my children and the other people around me can say, "Hey, I want some of the Torah that she's living. What's the Kool-aide that she's drinking? I want some of that." Maybe there will be one less dish for Shabbat, while I cooked it listening to some really uplifting music and dancing around the kitchen. What if I clean for Pesach and I put on my bathing suit and slip and slide down the hall when Jeremy spills that bucket? Ok, maybe we don't need me to go off in a wheel-chair, right? We don't need me in an ambulance, no. But you get the picture, right? So, maybe that will be enough to motivate and inspire us and our children to be extra careful in keeping the commands because we associate them with joy and positivity.



Ok, Jeremy, now you can wipe that smile off your face just because you're right one time. Doesn't mean anything, just remember that I'm right most of the time, ok? Bye guys.

Jeremy

Thank you, Tehila. Thank you, Noam, for that cameo. I think that is exactly in tune. You know the High Holidays are serious. It's like the Torah portion is here as an eternal reminder. You know, you got to have fun, you've got to have joy. You need to enjoy the ride. And so, I have a surprise for everyone here at the fellowship. So many people have asked me for an update from the Arugot Farm. What is new, what's being built, what's happening! And there's some people in this fellowship that are literally love sick with Israel. They miss Israel so much, so I made a short video for you. But it's not just an update and it's not just a video. It's a full-blown Judean extravaganza. It's a wedding like I've never seen before. It was the first wedding that we've ever hosted out here on the mountain. We expected 700 people to show up. It turned out that almost 1,000 people came. The timing. Nothing less than a spice cart from above. You know, Rosh Hashanah, the day of the shofar, the day of remembering. The first time we ever remember hearing the shofar in the Torah was at Mt. Sinai. Exodus chapter 19, verse 19. This is the first shofar that we know about.



So, this holiday has so many dimensions. But one of them is to bring us back to when Israel made God King at Sinai. The greatest inauguration of all times. But we weren't like subjects crowning the King. Sinai was our chuppah. And at that time, Israel married themselves to the King in an eternal covenant. And so, how timely, right before Rosh Hashanah, we hosted our first wedding. So enjoy this short journey into the heart of the mountains of Judea, into a Judean celebration like no other. Here you go.

#### Video

Oh, my goodness. We've never had a wedding here before. But that's what's happening here. The Arugot Farm is alive. The whole place looks unbelievable. Right behind me here, there's the bride. Over there, being built is our first chuppah, overlooking the mountains of King David, all the way down to the Dead Sea. Our public bathrooms are finished, literally, the day of the wedding. I mean they're not pretty just yet, but they're functioning. And I guess that's all we need. Look what's going on behind me here. I mean, it's an entire encampment. There are lights that are being strewn from our House of Prayer all the way down to the big area there. I mean we have to go down there to check this out. I mean, people have been working on this now the entire week. Yossi, one of the original partners of the Arugot Farm, who's really in charge of all of the agriculture, the working, the building. His oldest daughter is getting married. And we said, where else would we rather have our wedding than here? And so...I mean this dead mountain has truly come to life. And you just can't believe it.



Look at this. All the things here below. Look there's all the tables. Look. It's unbelievable. Come on, we're going to go down there, I'm going to show you more.

Ok, we're right now at the heart of the property. Behind me, our educational center that's under construction, that's really moving along quite nicely. And then, behind me here, this is going to be the band. We've put these huge big piles of hay there. There's going to be a men's section here, a woman's section for dancing on the other side. Over here, is one tent for food. Down there, another tent for food. There's light...at nighttime here last night when they first turned on the light, it was like a magical awakening of this mountain. And so, it's all happening now. Look, I think there are 140 tables that are set up just here. But then there are also tables that are set up down there and more tables set up down there. There are going to be 700 people at this outdoor wedding here tonight.



And look at this. Oh, I'm sorry. These aren't tables. They are tables that are kind of Bedouin style. Old school Judean. I don't know! But they're all across the bottom part here. I mean, this is going to be a wedding like no other. And so I'm going to do my very best to document the whole thing for you guys. Because this is the first time we've ever held a real gathering of spirit in such a huge way before on this farm.

So right now, the challah and the chatan both go on their separate ways. And they pray the last prayer before their chuppah. And they pray it as if it's the day of Yom Kippur. Full atonement, total renewal, rebirth, a new life. And all of her girlfriends are all waiting around for her now. And soon they'll return and there will just be a moment when all of them are praying together. And all of the husband's friends are praying together. And we'll go and visit the husband in just a little bit. But this is what it looks like here.



(music)

Ok, so now we're going over to where the chatan is, to where the groom is. He chose to have his place in our House of Prayer. And I'm sure it's just going to be spectacular. Ok, I'm looking inside here right now. Ok, what's happening right now, the parents are sitting together now. And they're going over the wedding contract. It's like two families coming together and all their friends are here, they're playing music.

So this is what's happening now. The chatan is done, contracts are signed, families are coming together. And now, we're going to dance the chatan to go and meet his bride whom he hasn't seen for seven days. And I think in some ways, this is really the climax of the wedding. It's like so romantic, so beautiful. So, watch this.





Alright, so now we're dancing the chatan to the chuppah. And the weather here couldn't be nicer. The sun is setting in the mountains here. And now the chuppah begins. Absolutely unbelievable.



The energy here is absolutely explosive. Unbelievable. The mountains of Judea are lit!



(end of video)

I can't tell you how much fun we had. It was just...the mountain came to life. I mean for that night, there was no corona, there was no Afghanistan, there was no Hamas, there was no nothing. There was just absolute prophecy being fulfilled in the mountains of Judea. The voice of a husband, the voice of a wife. The joy and the happiness. I mean it was like something out of legends and fairytales. It was unbelievable.

And you know, the High Holidays are ahead of us. And that just brought such a spirit that's kind of with us now. And there's a lot of work that needs to be done. And the more that we prepare ourselves, like in marriage, in life. The more we build our vessels, the more light we can contain. You know, western holidays, they have like holiday sales. And Torah holidays, we have spiritual work and preparation. It's a little bit of a different scale.

And you know, one of the funniest things that happened to us in America. When Tehila and I took the kids to a campsite for Shabbat for our last trip. And you know, I always take the opportunity to talk with whoever I can, just constantly gleaning, looking for messages, looking for angels that might be sent to me. And you never know who might be sent your way. And so, I was looking for some lighter fluid to start a bonfire that we could all sit around Friday night. And I met this older man. And I asked him, "Hey, where are you from?" And he said, "I live here now." And I said, "Really? I spend my whole year hoping to take my children camping for the highlight of their summer. And it's the best time of our year. And you get to live here all year round?" He loved that. So I asked him, "So what do you do?" And he said, "Well, I've been working for 50 years and now I do absolutely nothing."

And I was so thrilled with what he said. It was like the man lives in Shabbat all the time. That's amazing. I don't know if that's the best way to live, but I'm always busy doing, traveling, building, running, going. And I felt like that man was sent right to me. Hey, you should know. I couldn't stop thinking about it all Shabbat. Like, wow, he's doing absolutely nothing. That's so deep. I'm still thinking about that guy. And you know, we're having our Friday night meal outside by the bonfire, and Tehila says, "Jeremy, can you go inside and get the ketchup from inside our cabin?" And I said, "Tehila, we've been married for 19 years and now I'm doing absolutely nothing!" You can imagine that she really loved that one. But you know, doing nothing is easy, you know. Working on yourself, growing, drawing closer to good, drawing

closer to God, it's a service, it's work. But in that work is joy and happiness and fulfillment and blessing and that is a promise in the Bible. That we're going to enjoy the fruit of our labor.

And I've been, you know, I've just seen that true in my whole life. And with every person that I've ever met, people that are always working to grow, to become better, they're just happier people. They're more blessed people. That's just the promise of the Bible. And Rosh Hashanah, the shofar is a wake-up call. And you know, maybe we took a break during the summer, maybe we weren't eating everything we should have been eating. And it's a call to duty. It's like the King is calling his soldiers back to service. The shofar is our alarm clock to wake us up. And we're actually told it's blown to wake us up. To remember. And that's why the day is called Yom HaZikaron.

There is a beautiful ancient Judean parable in the Midrash. A king loves his subjects very much and he invites all his kingdom to his palace. Because he wants to meet each and every person, one on one, individually. And the king loves his people and he's overwhelmed with love. He made the most amazing happening in his palace. Every kind of food, drinks, everything was served, entertainment, jesters, magicians, clowns for the children, live music played by musicians from around the world, wild animals were brought to make sure everyone just had the best time.

And as the sun was setting, the King's knights all got together and blasted the shofars together all around the courtyards of the palace. And the blasts startled people. They all got lost in the distractions, the entertainment, the music, the drinking, the feasting. They forgot why they were invited to the palace. They were brought to the palace to meet the king one on one. And they got lost in all the distractions of the world. And sometimes we forget. In Rosh Hashanah, we blow the shofar to remember. We make God the King of our lives, one on one. I mean, we all forget. I have a terrible memory. I have such a bad memory, I went to the doctor to get pills to help me have a better memory, but I keep on forgetting to take them. (laughter) It's so funny, I see some people laughing and some people like loving concern, like, "oh Jeremy, you're taking pills..." That's a joke, I have memory pills, but I forget to take them. I just love you guys. It's a joke.

Alright, if only I had a good memory, if only we all had a good memory. I mean that really is the key to life. It's true. It's like, if I could only remember the way that Tehila looked at me under the chuppah, I would be a greater husband. If only I could remember the moment Eden was born, I would be a much better father. It's like so often, we're just on auto-pilot. We're just doing what we're doing because that's what we do. That's what it means to be asleep. The shofar is the ultimate wake-up call. It's like an end to the endless domino effect, you know. We'll get to that in a little bit.

A rabbi told me this funny story. Jews have all these funny stories as they're traveling through the world. And you know, TSA, they never know what to do with us. And so, I remember one time that I got pulled aside in a random selection, and the guy says, "excuse me sir, what are



those?” And he’s talking about my strings outside of my shirt. And I wanted to be like, “stand back...stand back, my lasers!” But I didn’t want to spend the night in prison, but I didn’t know what to tell him. It’s just my tzitzit...it’s like a reminder to be good, to remember God.

And my rabbi told me this funny story. He was traveling around America, and he had two different shofars. He had a big shofar and a little shofar and he was going around teaching about Rosh Hashanah. TSA officer stopped him and said, “Excuse me sir, what are those?” And then he wanted to like pull out an anti-Semitic joke and be like, “This are my horns, I’ve been hiding them.” But he didn’t to say that because he didn’t want to spend his night in prison either. But, actually what he did say was, “These are my alarm clocks. They help me wake up the people that I’m teaching.” And I think that is exactly what the shofar is here for. It’s like to understand this time and the opportunity that this time offers spiritually.

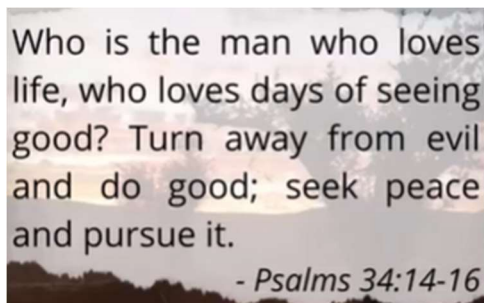
I think it’s best to really think of it as dominos. It’s like dominos are falling and pushing us just wherever they’re directed. Just auto-pilot without a pilot. It’s like so much of life, so much of how we feel, so much of how we act, what we do is like a result of the past. Dominos fall and they just keep on knocking into the next one and this endless chain reaction. This actually happened to me one morning when I was still jet-lagged. I woke up in the morning like late morning, I stubbed my toe on my way to brush my teeth, I yelped, I woke up Tehila because I yelped in pain, she got mad at me because she finally fell asleep and I just woke her up in my clumsiness, I walked out of my room and my children were playing some kind of loud game and I raised my voice at them and because they were going to wake up everyone else and they got all sad and then I felt really guilty about being a bad father, and then I poured my coffee and I missed and just spilled it onto my hand, the hot water. Just like one domino effect after the other. But a lot of life is just like that. We bring the luggage of yesterday into our day today and the baggage of last month into the next month. And Rosh Hashanah is the ultimate halt. It’s the most auspicious time to stop whatever dominos have been falling and start a new chain reaction toward the new year.

And that’s the purpose of this time. That’s the purpose of teshuva. Let’s get our life in realignment, return to ourselves, return to the path that we want to be on, chart a new course and start a new chain reaction in a direction that we’ve thought about, that we’ve prayed about. A direction that we’ve chosen. It’s not letting the world around us dictate our direction, but it’s proactively charting a new course for our lives. How do we do that?

So, the Rambam, Maimonides, one of the great sages of Israel put it like this. Rosh Hashanah, we stop the play of our life, the movie of our life. We edit it and we stop. We’ve made it this far. How are we doing? If the movie of our life ended right now, would we be happy with what we’ve done with our lives? It’s like Rosh Hashanah is called Yom HaDin, a Judgment Day. When we make God King, the King is the ultimate judge. And on this day we take stock of our own. It’s like our own self-reflection. What have we done right? What have we done wrong? This is the time to set it all right again. It’s like on one hand, we want to have a vision and a dream for the coming year and set these dominos in the right direction. But the best way is to

crown the King, not yourself. Don't ask what you want from the King in the new year, but ask what does the King want from us?

It's like, this year has spun us all around. It's like everyone is a little bit dizzy. And it's like, how do you overcome dizziness? You focus on one thing. You keep your sight on one and everything else straightens out. Rosh Hashanah, we aim toward heaven and aim at the ultimate One. And that's going to straighten us all out. And I know that some people are saying, "I just don't know what God wants from me. That's so much that's beyond me. That's too much. The whole thing is too confusing, it's overwhelming." So... 15 kilometers at a time. What's the next first good step? Advice given to us by King David in the book of Psalms in chapter 34:



What is King David saying to us here? Stay away from bad. Right now, think of one thing that you're doing that's harming you, that's blocking you, that's stifling your growth, that's bringing curses into your life. Just one thing. Stop doing. Whatever we're doing that's harming us...turn away from evil and do good.

What's one habit that if you adopted that one habit, you would have the best benefit in your life? Maybe it's waking up early, maybe it's your diet, maybe it's your exercise, maybe it's reading, meditating, praying, there's so many good habits that we need to adopt. One good thing. Just one. Do it. Turn away from the bad, turn toward the good. Strengthen what we're doing that's bringing blessings, turn away from what's bringing us curses. This is the time, just one step. Rethink, it's time to remember now. To renew and for all of you that have your journals. If you have your journals in front of you, this is the time. Right now. Just, from your gut, what's the one bad thing you're doing that if you stopped that one bad thing, your life would be a heck of a lot better?

And what's the one good thing you could adopt, that you could change? That would be like, that's just going to bring my life to a whole new level. You can change your mind later, but just right now what comes out of your heart, just write it down. Sometimes what comes up just first is just a really good gauge. It's the first 15 kilometers on our way to reach the South Pole. Just one step in the right direction toward the good. And it's like now more than ever, this time in the calendar is calling us to go inside, to find God in our lives. And I know that some people say like, "I just don't know what that means and I don't know how to do that." But the Hebrew tradition teaches us through Rosh Hashanah that you actually do, you just need to remember.

There's an ancient Midrash based on the mystical writings. They say that while a baby is in the womb, an angel comes and teaches him everything that there is to know, the entire Torah, all of the truths of the world. And then right before he's born, the baby knows everything and the angel comes and touches him right above his lip and under his nose. And right as he's born, he

forgets it all. And it's like, what? Why would the angel teach him everything, only then to make him forget everything? It's like, such deep wisdom here. The Judean wisdom is saying, teaching the true education isn't learning, it's remembering. When you hit upon a truth, you'll know it because you already know it. You knew it before you were even born. And now, you just rediscovered, you just remembered, it's Yom HaZikaron, you're now remembering what you've always known. It's actually inside us. We have that ability to already really know. And I know what I need to know. We all know what we need to know. Our challenge in this world is that we need to remember. That's why Rosh Hashanah is called Yom HaZikaron, Day of Remembering. The inner work that needs to be done for the New Year, is always expressed in the first three pages of my journal. And this work accompanies me throughout the whole year. Those three pages are with me, I may go through five journals in one year, but those three pages come with me all throughout. On the first page, I have the verses, the Scriptures, my mantras – who I want to be. Reminders of what I want to manifest in the world through my being. The Scriptures that are my inspiration, my reminders.

The second page we discussed last time. What are the ingredients that I want in my life that are beyond my career? The ingredients that make up my inner world. That make life worth living. The third page we're going to discuss that right before Yom Kippur. But Tehila was sharing with me a verse that struck her from the Siddur on Friday night. And I'm going to be adding it to my first page, and I just wanted to share it with you. And here's the verse from the Siddur from the Friday night service. The song is called Yedid Nefesh. It's a love song to God. And it says:



Fast, quickly. Love. Quickly. It's like demanding, quickly love! For the time is coming. For the time has come. And Tehila's like, "You know, we just never know when our time is going to come." Love quickly. Fast. Don't wait. Quick. Just love. Spread more love in the world. Spread more light in the world. Be fast. Don't hesitate. Go. For the time has come. The time has come, the time is coming and we don't have any other time. Quickly, just spread more love, spread more light. This is the time to wake up, it's the time to remember, it's the time to realign our dominos and set them in the direction that we want and love is at the core of that. Quick. Fast. Love. The time has come. We have no idea. Don't waste on a hating, don't waste our time on anger. Fast, love. Call who you need to call before Rosh Hashanah. Hug who you need to hug before Rosh Hashanah. Quick, fast, love, the time is coming. The shofar is calling us to remember what really matters in life.

And dear fellowship, may you all be blessed to remember what really matters in life. May you be grateful to know that you are blessed beyond measure with everything that you have. Quick, love, the time is coming. May you enjoy every blessing and know that you are blessed from Zion.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

We're going to go into this Israel together, we're going to go into this year blessed. Shalom, my friends.