

Session 245
Sukkot – A Celebration for all Nations
12 October 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n73uxfB18vI>

Jeremy

Hey, everybody. Shalom, welcome to the Arugot Farm. Happy Sukkot, Chag Sameach! If you see behind us, you see the beautiful rolling hills of Judea, you see the Arugot Farm, you can actually see the Dead Sea right behind us there. The water's sort of like now turning a little bit purplish. And this is what we are all here for. To invite...I mean, I just saw on the chats now, Switzerland, South Africa, the United Kingdom, all over America, from Oklahoma to Montana. We have Switzerland, the Far East, we have so many people, the whole world! And now, we want to invite you into Ari Abramowitz's sukkah.

Ari

Welcome to my sukkah! This is so close to my dream, yet so far. Because you're all here with us, but just through a screen. Next year, bizrat HaShem, please God, you'll be here in person. But this is what it's like.



You're coming in, and then you are in the sukkah. It's a little bit of a production studio right now as you see, but this is where the magic happens. And here's the lovely Tehila. And I would take you into my home where my kids are having a melt-down, but who needs that right now? We don't

need that, we don't need that. Anyways, we want to sit down and have a Fellowship!

Jeremy

Well, it is absolutely gorgeous to have you all here, we're thrilled to have you. Chag Sameach, happy Sukkot, and we are going to get started. Behind me, obviously, is Ari's decoration, the heart of his Sukkah, the House of Prayer for all nations. Actually here on the Arugot Farm, it's pretty windy today. And so you might see the walls shaking just a little bit, but that's exactly like

Abraham's tent, because Abraham spent a lot of time in these mountains as well. So we're just going back into Abraham's tent, and we're inviting all of you to join us.

And so, with that, we have all of the set up almost set up. And now I want to invite Ari Abramowitz to kick off the Fellowship in his military uniform as we take the lulav, like a sword out against the forces of evil, only through the spiritual power of Sukkot. And we are this year, going to put an end to all of the chaos, bizrat HaShem. All right, here's Ari.

Ari

Ok, shalom everybody, give me a thumbs up if you can hear me. I just need that confirmation. Ok, fantastic. It is a joy to host you in our humble little tabernacle here, nestled in the very mountains where King David once fled from Saul and found refuge beneath the protective wings of the Divine, right here. And so, this gathering is more than symbolic. It carries a prophetic, a redemptive joy, a taste of the unity and faith that will fill the world when all the nations come to dwell under HaShem's sheltering Presence.

And we're going through crazy times right now. But I have been very comforted by the Torah portions, by the words of the prophets that are lining up perfectly with the times that we're going into right now. And so, like I said, although this year we're meeting virtually, my blessing is that next year we'll be together right here in the Land of Israel, under the same sky as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, King David, Aaron, Moses...well not Moses. Moses was right over those mountains over there. But this is where it is. Because as we gather beneath the shade of the sukkah, that fragile, beautiful dwelling of faith, we open our hearts, not only to the Jewish people, but to all those from among the nations who love HaShem, who love His people, and who are yearning to walk in His ways. Because Sukkot, more than any other festival is the invitation from Israel to the world. And as we said last week, the Feast of Tabernacles is a rehearsal for redemption, when all of mankind will stand as one under the covering of heaven. The prophet Zecharia, Zechariah, foresaw this moment when he said:

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

• Zechariah 14:16

Everyone who's left from all of the nations which came against Jerusalem! I can't imagine such a thing. All of the nations turning against Israel? Science fiction, or not. Or it's current events. But anyways, we discussed this last week. This will not be a test of those who can build a booth or wave a

lulav. It's a test of trust. Can we together learn to trust in HaShem's protection? Can we live our lives knowing that our true shelter is not made of stone or wood, but of faith, of emunah?

So to all of you joining us, Jews and the righteous among the nations, welcome home to the sukkah of faith, to the sukkah of David, to the sukkah of redemption. That's the times we're in right now. And this is the only holiday in which we are commanded....commanded to be joyful. How can you be commanded to be joyful? Well, we'll talk about that soon. But we are commanded to be joyful, we are. And each and every one of you that are here with us now are bringing that much more joy into our sukkah, into our holiday, into our Fellowship, and into our lives. So welcome, and thank you for being here.

Now, before we dive in, I want to once again thank Ardelle for putting together our beautiful prayer booklet, which is really a gift which allows us to enter into each other's lives, to pray with one another and for one another. And as we open the Fellowship, I want to lift up as many of those prayers and blessings as I can. And if somehow I missed yours, please forgive me. And reach out to me so I can make sure I include it next time.

HaShem, Abba, thank You for this holiday of joy. For the beauty of Sukkot and for the shelter of Your Presence. We thank You for bringing us together as we seek to better serve You and know Your ways. Let love between the members of this Fellowship, whether Jews or Christians, or anyone else, let that love grow as more hearts return to the ancient paths of faith. We pray for Rachelle's safe and restful travels, for Keleigh's husband's healing and strength, for Audrey's family to walk boldly with You in clarity and in devotion. Bring healing to Samuel, Godfried, and all those who suffer in body or spirit. Protect Your people from deception and raise up godly leaders in our nations. We thank You for Beth's father's blessed memory, for Jessica and Levi's answered prayers, for Catherine's prayers in Jerusalem, for Erin's full recover, for Mirella's gratitude, bless HaShem, Diana's family with joy and faith, and Cal and Ardelle with strength, and peace, and joy in their home. And above all, we pray for the peace of Yerushalyim, for the safe return of every hostage, and for wiping our enemies off the face of the earth, for they are the embodiment of all that is evil. It's just true. And for, HaShem, please Your light to shine over Israel and all those who love You. Amen.

Now, the truth is, that on a very personal level, I have been finding Sukkot to be surprisingly challenging holiday. Because while I really do see myself as a happy and grateful Jew, it's seem to be dafka on Sukkot, the one time we're actually commanded to rejoice, but my joy comes under the greatest attack. I don't know if any of you identify with that, but it's just true. And this isn't new. It happens in a few years past. Recently, over the past few years. And let's just put it this way. This year has been no exception. Now don't get me wrong. There have been many beautiful, joyfilled moments, but that deeper, steady current of joy...the kind we're meant to live in during Sukkot, I've been finding that rather elusive.

Unlike previous years, my struggle this year has lead me to a breakthrough, one that is so powerful, it made all those inner battles, possibly made them completely worth it. And I can't wait to open my heart and share with you. But before I do, allow me to introduce my dear friend, Jeremy who will no doubt offer an uplifting and inspiring message that you won't want to miss, albeit inferior to Tehila's immediately afterwards.

Jeremy

All right, chag sameach, thank you all very much. Just wonderful to be celebrating Sukkot together. It just fills my heart with so much simcha. And Sukkot is the ultimate holiday. It's the climax of everything that we work on all year round. And to really understand that, you have to understand the Hebrew calendar. And let me explain. Sukkot is unique among all of the holidays because on one hand, we just celebrated the high holidays, the amim noramim. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur after 30 days of doing teshuva during Elul. We've now finally climaxed into Sukkot.

But on the other hand, there's another side to Sukkot, that's a part of the three pilgrimages. It starts on Passover, and then Shavuot, and then Sukkot. The Torah says, three times a year, come to the Temple to celebrate with me. And so there's two calendars that are in play here and they all converge on the one holiday of Sukkot that somehow melds everything together. On one hand, Sukkot is a part of the high holy days at the beginning of the year of Tishrei. It's like it climaxes at the end of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, it finally ends with the happiness of Sukkot.

And on the other hand, it's also the climax of the three pilgrimage holidays. We have Shavuot where the Torah was given, we have Passover where we were released from Egypt, and it finally ends off with Sukkot. And that's really peculiar because Sukkot, we're really remembering our travels in the desert. Either we had the clouds of glory that's what the sukkah represents, or it was that we actually built little huts, little tabernacles, little sukkahs around as we travelled from place to place in the desert. But why does it appear right now in the calendar? It really shouldn't, it should have been like Passover we left, we walked to Sinai and there throughout the desert, in these sukkot, either the clouds of glory or we lived in huts. And then we celebrated Shavuot. The climax should be Shavuot. Why does it wait until Sukkot?

So obviously the Torah is setting up a scenario that both of these calendars of the high holy days and the three pilgrimage festivals, all convene into one epic holiday. And it's not a coincidence that the book of Zechariah, Ari just quoted it, it all ends, it culminates, Mashiach comes and the righteous among the nations that are left over from the nations that turn against Israel, come what? To celebrate the ultimate holiday with us. They come to celebrate Sukkot.

Now what I want to do, is I want to give you a taste of what Sukkot is like in Israel. And people ask me all the time, “Ari, Jeremy, how do you guys have a global Fellowship of representations from all the nations that are coming to learn Torah in Israel? It’s like a global community, a global movement. How did that ever come to pass?”

So I want to show you a little insight that Ari and I are able to give you. Fifteen years ago, we made this video about Sukkot. Ari and I are in it and we look a lot younger, let me tell you. But it is called, “Sukkot, a Celebration for all Nations.” But I really feel like you get the energy of what Jerusalem feels like in this holiday. So check out this video from fifteen years ago.

(video)

Ari

Once a year, the city of Jerusalem turns green and yellow. And despite our deep historical ties with the state of Wisconsin, and our well known affinity for cheese, this has nothing to do with the Green Bay Packers.



Throughout the city, families build these little booth-like huts that they live in throughout the holiday. They have a citron fruit, and a date palm, it’s called the lulav, and etrog in Hebrew, that they use to worship God on the holiday of Sukkot. To the untrained eye, the

overwhelming sensations on the holiday of Sukkot may be so extreme, that they may not notice a very curious phenomena. The Gentiles!

Jeremy

In the midst of the biblical holiday of Sukkot, celebrated exclusively by the Jewish people, today we see as many, if not more, non-Jews making the voyage to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot. The last time we saw anything like this representation from all nations of the world, was in Solomon's Temple, over 3,500 years ago.

It shall be that all who are left over, the remnant of the nations who had come to Jerusalem, people will go up every year to worship the King, Hashem, Master of Legions and to celebrate the festival of Sukkot.



People aren't just coming to Jerusalem to celebrate this festival, there are families all over the world, from different backgrounds, different religious affiliations, that are building little huts outside of their homes, freaking out their

neighbors, all to celebrate the biblical festival of Sukkot.

Like things in Judaism, there are some rules that apply building the sukkah. Through the Hebrew word sukkah as written in the Torah, we are able to see that sukkah may have 2 ½, 3, or preferably 4 walls. The height of the sukkah cannot exceed cubits, while the width cannot exceed infinity. That's right. A sukkah can be as wide as you want. The laws of building a sukkah reveal the essence of the holiday, a sukkah can be as expansive as possible to include as many people as possible. Because one day, the entire world will leave the security of their homes and enter into the ultimate sukkah in Jerusalem. Hope to see you there. Chag Sameach!



Chag Sameach (from many countries)
(end of video)

Jeremy

All right, there it is, a blast from the past. And so, Sukkot is the holiday of happiness. And it's interesting that like how is the happiness expressed? It's not expressed through extravagant Shabbat meals with the finest dishes, it's literally expressed in a little hut, in the clouds of glory, in total simplicity, total, simple life. Because when you realize, all that matters are the people that are around us. All that matters are our loved ones. All that matters is God's Presence in our home. We don't even need a roof over our head. What do we have? We have branches that give us a roof. And that life of total simplicity focuses us on what really matters. And the happiness is not just in simplicity, it's realizing, without even a roof over our head, HaShem is taking care of us, HaShem is guiding us.

But in Israel, to really see the providence, you have to live with the Hebrew calendar. Because everyone knows that the war started on October 7th. And right now, we're living in historic times. Today is October 12th, and that doesn't really feel like much. But on the Hebrew calendar, in Israel, the hostages are slated to return on the last day of Sukkot, exactly two years after the war started, to the day. And the leader of the free world is coming to visit Jerusalem during the holiday of Sukkot, on the holiday that's explicitly dedicated as a celebration for all nations. I mean these are the days that world leaders would come to Jerusalem to receive the blessings for their nations for the coming year. And that's what's happening now, and President Trump's Jewish envoys were blessing and shaking the lulav and etrog and the four species at the Kotel before His visit. It's like all of these events, they're of biblical proportions.

People will look back at these times and see biblical history unfolding, seeing the signs, seeing the providence, it's like...that IS the deep sense of happiness. Because we can't understand everything. There are a lot of things that are happening now in Israel that are beyond our comprehension. But we can see spice carts, we can see God's light shining the way. Seeing His little sparks of providence. When Joseph was sold into slavery, ended up in prison, in a pit, like a hostage in Egypt. It says that he was taken for exactly two years. And now, we're literally ending up exactly two years where the first Jewish prisoner, underground, is now being released exactly two years to the day. They're being brought home.

So you have to see God's fingerprints on everything we have experienced in the last two years in Israel. Because that's the essence. We were traveling through the desert with scorpions and scorching sun, and it was the sukkot, the clouds of glory, or even the little huts that gave us the providence and protection that allowed us to finally arrive in the Land of Israel. And now, we're standing on the border. We are right at the edge, about to enter into eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel, in a new Jerusalem again.

And so, with that, I want to wish you all a chag sameach and always look for spice carts in your life because those spice carts are the lights that will bring us the happiness of Sukkot. And so, I want to pass it off to Ari now...oh, I don't want to pass it off to Ari now. I want to pass to pass it off to Tehila now. That's my wife who is the source of the simcha in my life. She is also the leader of Women of Valor, the women's fellowship of the Fellowship. If you haven't, you should absolutely check it out. She is one of the greatest Torah teachers in the Land of Israel today and she is dedicated to our Fellowship, she is dedicated to all of you and she is here to share some Torah on Sukkot. So with that, I would love to introduce the beautiful and wonderful, Tehila Gimpel.

Tehila

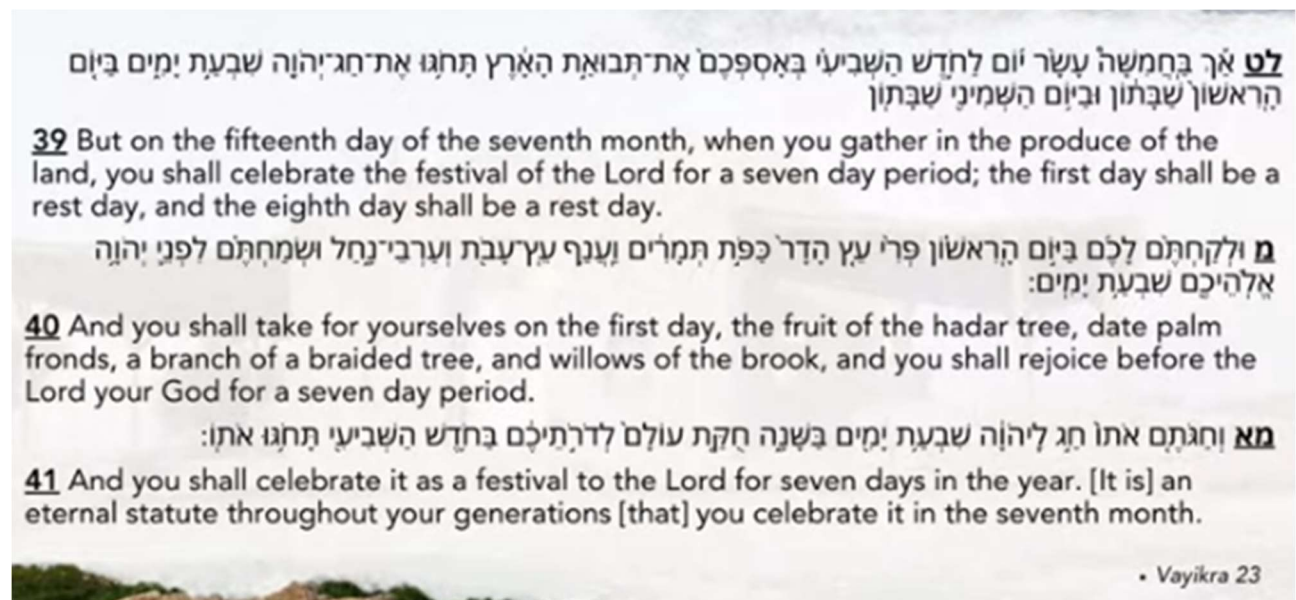
Thank you, it's so much fun to see everybody, like actually out here in our sukkah in the Farm. I'm looking at all of your faces. It feels like you're right with us in the sukkah, it's so cool. You know, I'm sure this will come as a tremendous surprise to you, but we're kind of last minute people, so I never actually know what Ari and Jeremy what are going to be teaching before they teach it, and I'm kind of meditating on what I want to be talking about. And I'm on my own. What's so amazing, I feel like what both of the guys were talking about, really connects and leads into what I wanted to share with you guys today. So I just think it's so cool and everything feels so connected.

So as you guys see, we are in the heart of the festival of Sukkot. And it's the beginning of the year and we started Rosh Hashana, the New Year, and it's kind of a new year, but it's also not really the beginning of the year and in a lot of ways, it's the end of the year because Sukkot is the last of the three festivals. And we start with Passover, the Exodus, and then we have receiving the Torah on Shavuot, and then the final festival is Sukkot.

But of all the festivals, in a lot of ways, this one is the hardest to understand. Like chronologically, calendarly, it's the only holiday that seemingly nothing happened on. The other festivals were remembering something that happened. Assuming that we're in the desert for 40 years, we sat in booths all of the time, if they were booths. And if they were clouds, we were in the clouds all the time. Nothing specific happened that we know of on this day. Like if you were going to make a holiday for something, to commemorate, if you were wanting to commemorate something that happened on that time, and something that was significant. So we don't actually know in the Torah of any story that happened on the 15th day of Tishrei. And even if we had entered these booths on the 15th day, what's so special about booths? What's so special about being in booths? We also used silverware, I don't know, we had chairs. Like we had lots of things. Of course, when you're in the desert, you're going to be in a booth, where else are you going to be.

So it's like, what is happening in this holiday? What is the essence of this time? And I'm not surprising you, you guys all have read the Torah, you know that the festivals are mentioned in different places. And in the different appearances of the festivals in the Torah, they have different names. And each name represents different aspects of the holiday. So if we're trying to really understand what this holiday is about, we're going to want to look closely at the name. For example, we know Passover as Passover, we know Passover as the festival of the unleavened bread, of matzah, and we know it is the holiday of the spring. And the same with Shavuot. We know it as Shavuot, the festival of First Fruits.

But we have a really unusual name for Sukkot and I can't believe that up until this year, I've never noticed one of the names of Sukkot. When we're first introduced to Sukkot in Vayikra, in Leviticus 23, it's just called Sukkot, we're just told that we celebrate the festival of Sukkot. What's interesting is that the holiday is then mentioned again in a little bit more detail to tell us what the holiday is about. But here, in the second appearance of the holiday, it's not called Sukkot, let's read the verses carefully. It says:



Ok, what do you guys notice in this second experience of the holiday? What is the name here? When we first read about it, ok, it's called Sukkot. Maybe we think it's called Sukkot because the sukkah is the main thing and it says to live in a sukkah, you do it for HaShem, great. But here, the second time, what is the name? Do you guys see it? I don't know how I've mixed this so many times, it literally just calls it "the holiday of God, the holiday of the Lord." Twice.

And then when it tells us to go live in the sukkah, it says, you go live in the sukkah when it goes on further. It tells us to live in the sukkah, it says, "You live in the sukkah because HaShem put us in the sukkah." And so while you might think what makes this time special is that we're staying in a sukkah and we're doing it for HaShem, the way we celebrate the other festivals. We bring fruit fruits FOR HaShem. But when the Torah goes into detail and explains to us the real essence of the holiday, that's not what it says. The name...the essence, the fundamental characteristic of the holiday is first and foremost, it's a holiday of "the Lord," it's the holiday of HaShem. The purpose of the holiday is not just to remember something. It's right there, baked in the name. It's baked in the name of the holiday. The purpose of the holiday is HaShem, Himself. HaShem is the event. That is what is happening. Being with HaShem, being with HaShem's Presence IS the event that we are celebrating. It happens in a sukkah where you will

be able to feel it is in the sukkah. But you're not celebrating the walls of the sukkah. The walls are what are allowing you to experience the essence of the holiday. It is a holiday of the Lord, it's baked in the name.

And if you guys don't believe me, and you're like, "Ahhh, ok, it's just because it's a holiday that we're also doing it for the Lord. Maybe that's not really the name." You can go to Bemidbar, to Numbers 29 where the holidays are listed again. And here all the holidays are called different names, according to their different essences. Rosh Hashana is referred to as the holiday of the blowing/sounding of the horn. Once again, here it doesn't say anything about the name Sukkot. It calls it again, the holiday of the Lord. It's the only holiday where the name of God is the name of the holiday. The rest of the holidays it says, you should eat matzah, it tells you to do it before God, bring the First Fruits, an offering to God. God is commanding us, inviting us to do in order to attain a spiritual experience or development that we need to attain on each particular holiday. The holiday of Sukkot is actually the holiday of God, Himself.

So what is that teach us? If we want to understand the essence of the holiday, the essence is not about...ok, this is going to sound...I'm trying to think of the exact right way to say this. It's not about the things we do, it's about who we do them with. The essence of the holiday is doing the commandments of Sukkot in the Presence of HaShem. You know, there's an idea that Passover, the Exodus, is like the beginning of our relationship with HaShem. It's like when we become engaged with HaShem. Because we're beginning our travels together and we take this journey until revelation. Shavuot is often compared to the wedding. We have a covenant with God. He appears to us and we make this covenant.

But in that sort of analogy, then what is Sukkot? Well Sukkot is when you actually build the house, like the marital dwelling place, where you're going to actually go and be together. Sometimes I'll go to a wedding, I can remember this from my own wedding. You can see like the husband and wife, they're kind of uncomfortable from all of the attention. They really just want to be together. They have to smile and take pictures because their families really want to have a nice party. But really they would be happy for the whole thing to just be over with and like go home and actually start life together. Have you guys ever felt like that? That's the way I felt on my wedding, I was like, "I don't need all this fancy stuff, I just want to go home and start life."

So you could imagine that like the plan should have been that we had 49 days, walking in the desert, we get to Mt. Sinai, we received the Torah, we don't do the golden calf, and then we just start living our marital life, like our together life with God in God's Presence among us in every aspect of life because we're keeping the commandments. But we sinned, we strayed after the golden calf and then the tablets and the covenant are broken. And it's like not clear, is this

marriage actually happening? It's as if like this ring...like the wedding ring is like thrown over like the bouquet. Like, "Yeah," and then you're like, "Is this marriage even going to continue? Is this going to be consummated?" We have this stage that carries on until Moshe brings us the second tablets on Yom Kippur that we are in this question. Until the 10th day of Tishrei, we're sort of in this question mark – is that covenant still real? Is that really happening?

And then if you look carefully, what happens when Moses comes down and brings the new tablets? In Exodus 33, Moses brings down the new tablets and immediately in 34, he says, "Look. There's something HaShem told me that we need to do." Do you guys remember what it is? There's this thing we need to do, we need to make a tabernacle. And we need this, that and the other. We need wool, we need wood, we need gold, we need silver. You don't have to bring it if you don't want to. It literally says, just bring it if you feel like it. You don't have to if you don't want to, it's not a commandment.

And then what happens is so overwhelming that the constructors of the Tabernacle actually have to beg Moses to get the people to stop bringing stuff. So imagine, when we get the second tablets on Yom Kippur, that's the day of forgiveness. It's like melded into the fabric of time that this will ever be a day of forgiveness. This is the day that our forgiveness is complete and we realize that the covenant is going to be everlasting, even though we didn't deserve it. HaShem forgave us.

And then what happens in the following few days? The Torah says, "Morning after morning after morning," they're just bringing stuff. They didn't have to bring all that stuff. That was the love, that was the pouring out of love. So GRA actually points out so brilliantly what I've never noticed, and I'm sure many of us haven't noticed. He says, "That moment where HaShem's like, 'Enough, you've brought so much stuff. It's ok, you can stop now.'" That was Sukkot, meaning a few days after Yom Kippur, that's cutting into Sukkot. What are we celebrating? The Vilna Gaon, the great genius whose actual day of passing falls on Sukkot, he says that it was at that moment that the Presence of God returned to the encampment.

And so the time that they started working on the actual Tabernacle, which would be the actual collective home for the Presence of God among us, was actually Sukkot. Meaning they started the building on Sukkot because that was when they completed getting all of the materials that the people were generous in their heart out of love to bring to HaShem. So it's not that we're not celebrating something that actually happened. We're celebrating that HaShem was willing to bring His Presence back into us. We started building a Tabernacle for Him and He created a place for us. And He surrounded us in love, He brought His Presence back in.

So when we say, the sukkah represents the clouds of glory that HaShem was carrying us, that's not just a metaphor, God's Presence actually came back to us and we were dwelling in His Presence because our hearts were generous to invite Him in. God forgave us, we invited Him back in, we started building a home for Him. So what do we do? We symbolically start building this festival of Tabernacles, these little homes that symbolize this place where we can be together with HaShem. So it's called the holiday of HaShem, and look at all of the things that we do. We build these rickety walls, we build these rickety coverings, just like we're commanded to do for the Tabernacle.

But what's so amazing, what is the generosity of their hearts? They left all of the stuff that they had in their home and gave it up. They said, "I don't need all of this gold, I don't need all this silver, I really just want to be together with HaShem. I don't need all of this." What do we say on Sukkot? We spend our whole life filling our houses with things that make us feel secure and safe and aesthetically pleasing and soft and comfy. We have our curtains and our furniture and all of our stuff. But the more stuff that we bring, we make ourselves feel safer and more secure. The more stuff we bring, it's like the less room there is to just be with HaShem. Right? Because we're like, "I have this, and I have that, and I have, and I have, and I have. But who am I with?"

On Sukkot we say, "Just like our forefathers in the desert said, 'I don't need all this stuff, HaShem, I don't need all of this stuff. I just want Your Presence.'" We say, "I don't need all of this stuff I have in my house. I'm going to go out. I just want to be with You, God." And we remember that time where we went into the desert and we didn't know where we were going, we didn't know how we were going to get there, we were just satisfied to be in that moment in the Presence of HaShem. So that is the essence of Sukkot, that is the House that we build.

You know, I was thinking to myself, "What can I say about this time that's so intense. We're so happy to have the hostages coming back, but we're so terrified having all of these terrorists let back in the street. What is going to happen with Chamas? I'm not an expert. Oh, my gosh, I have nothing to say." Well all I can say is what I know this holiday to be about, is that this holiday is about just trusting that HaShem will carry us through the desert. So all I can say is this is the time of great joy and fear of walking out into the unknown desert and not knowing what is going to happen, but we just wait for HaShem to carry us through this desert and trust Him to take care of us.

So with that I bless you guys and I recommend to just go out into your sukkah if you have one and just try to feel the blessing of being in the festival of HaShem, the festival of the Lord. Bye, guys.

Ari

Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. I should really have Jeremy go second because it's much easier to follow Jeremy than to follow Tehila, as you can imagine. Anyways, one of the great challenges that I've spoken about with all of you about regarding heading up this Fellowship, of the challenges of leading a community of such holy, sincere, and spiritually sensitive souls is that there are times in life when it feels like you simply can't live up to your own message. Jeremy is here right now, and I know he's going to make fun of me. "Are you paying them per hour to be your psycho-therapists?" I'm just being me, what am I going to say? But you know, because there are moments when you stumble, when you fall short. When the very truths you've dedicated yourself to sharing feel distant or out of reach. And when that happens, you really have two options. One is to keep it to yourself, to put on a face, continue broadcasting, and hope that no one notices that you're struggling to live out the very ideals that you teach. But you know it in your own heart. And the other option is to share from that place of struggle, to open up about the gap between what you believe and what you're actually experiencing. And to invite others into that vulnerability, that very real human place.

Because the truth is, that I don't believe that real leadership is about perfection. At least when you look at the leaders throughout the Torah, the Bible. We see that not one of them was perfect. It's not about perfection. It's about authenticity, it's about walking the path together, even when the path winds through darkness. Sometimes the most powerful thing a leader can do is not to preach from the mountaintop, but to share honesty from the valley. To say, "I'm still learning this, too. I'm still trying to live this truth. I'm still trusting HaShem in the midst of it all." And it's from that place, not of mastery, but of humility, that real connection and transformation begins. At least, that's what I believe. And it's from that place that I want to share the struggles I've been facing this year without getting into too many of the details.

But like I said, this year my joy was under attack. And while I definitely had my moments, I wasn't feeling the lightness and elation of faith-based...I wasn't feeling the joy that I wanted to or like I felt like I should feel. And then I often got even more upset that I wasn't feeling this exuberant happiness that I was supposed to be feeling. Do any of you identify with this? I don't know, but anyways, thank you, Rivkah! I appreciate that. I saw a lot of you raised your hands.

Anyways, I felt the battle, that's what I was feeling. The places inside of me that still doubt, that still fear, and that still try to control. And yet, the other night as I lay in the sukkah, trying to fall asleep, there was such winds and then the winds stopped and it was like, "Oh nice." And then, immediately the mosquitoes start buzzing all around my ears and I began to open my heart up to HaShem. You never know when the words will flow, when they will come. That's even a gift in and of itself, to have those words. I was opening up heart, not about the struggles

themselves, but about the fact that I was even struggling at all, and in the sukkah of all places. The sukkah, that place we're supposed to be rising above the world's worries, and we're being protected by HaShem in here and it should be reflected by that.

And then something sort of remarkable started happening. Even though I didn't feel happy necessarily immediately, a small opening appeared in my heart. A flash of clarity and I suddenly saw with striking simplicity, why. I've shared it with you in the past. I struggle with happiness from time to time, I think most of us do. But it was at that moment in the sukkah, under the beautiful stars of Judea that I felt HaShem helping me see why. The blemishes in my faith, the cracks in my bitachon, in my trust, they started to come into focus in a new way that I had never experienced before. Like Acham's razor, just a certain, clearer way. It's like HaShem brought them into the sukkah and said, "Look. This doesn't belong here."

I realized that it was not that I lost joy, it's that I saw what was blocking it with greater clarity and serenity than I can remember. And that clarity itself, that ability to see the foreign elements clouding my emunah, clouding my faith, well that was already healing, it was already healing! And at that moment, the sukkah felt like such an immersion of faith, that everything that was not part of that faith, was clarified and highlighted due to the great contrast. Does that make sense? I hope I'm articulating that well.

Anyways, it's almost like the sukkah is a spiritual X-ray, and when we step inside, we're surrounded by HaShem's light. The b'tzel emunah, the shadow of faith. And in that light, all the impurities of the heart become visible. Not so we can despair, God forbid, but so we can release those impurities. So that we can sift them out and let them go. Because joy isn't just created by adding light. It's also revealed by removing that which blocks it. And that was a big part of my experience. And I've never had that before.

And I realized that maybe that's part of what sukkahs all about. You know, a week long dialogue between my joy and my faith. A dialogue with HaShem where anything that doesn't align with trust in God, starts to feel alien and unnatural and out of place. Because when something feels foreign in the sukkah, when something feels foreign in our lives, it means we've already begun to move beyond it, to disconnect from it. And so, even though I didn't immediately feel happy, I felt grateful because HaShem was showing me what's standing in the way. And that gratitude in short time led to excitement and a new higher level of happiness than the one I was mourning that I didn't have to begin with.

You know our sages teach that sometimes when we can't access joy, HaShem removes the garments that cover our faith so that we can see them for what they are. So that we can

recognize the foreignness of doubt. So that we can connect with the deepest roots of our soul, where doubt does not exist, where doubt cannot exist. And when that happens, something shifts. You stop identifying with all of that struggle because you stepped into a higher sukkah, a sukkah of clarity. You begin to realize that feeling of doubt, fear, sadness, or even anger isn't a failure of joy. It's part of this process that leads to a deeper, truer simcha. A joy that's not dependent on circumstances, but rooted in the soul.

And that I believe is a big part of the real essence of Sukkot. That journey from emotional turbulence to inner transcendence. Because in the end, awareness is the first step towards freedom. And sometimes that awareness itself is an even greater gift than the simple happiness because the deepest joy comes from serving our Creator through growth, through refinement, and through the ongoing elevation of our faith and our trust and our character. Refining our character, that is what brings us closer.

And then for the first time, the sukkah began to feel for me like a mikvah. I've heard it referred to that in the past, but I never felt it. You know a mikvah, the idea...do you guys know what a mikvah is? We've talked about it before. You immerse yourselves, it's where the idea of baptism comes from. That's literally where that idea came from. You immerse yourself in water, totally immersed in it, in pure rain water, and it's almost like you've reconnected to the primordial of who you really are. It's a place not only of refuge, but of purification where we can wash away the subtle impurities that distance us from HaShem. And I've never felt that before, and it was though a veil had been lifted from my eyes and I could finally see on some level.

So, let's put some of it on the table. One of the struggles weighing on my heart this Sukkot has been the deal for the release of the hostages. How many of you have this on your minds and your hearts as well? Ok, I had a feeling. It's a pretty big deal. Because on the one hand, like all of Israel, I share in the overwhelming joy. Even the prospect of our brothers and sisters returning home is almost too beautiful to imagine. To waken something deep within us, the yearning, the hope, the tears, the relief, it's like in the heart of the nation of Israel, it's our Achilles Heel. We just want them to come home more than anything, and our enemy knows that.

But what's hard to get over the idea that such a thing could happen. But at the same time, it feels to me as though much of the nation has fallen into this kind of collective trance, as if that joy is the end of the story. And not just the beginning of a far more complicated and painful chapter. And anyone who dares to speak of the potential catastrophe that may emerge from

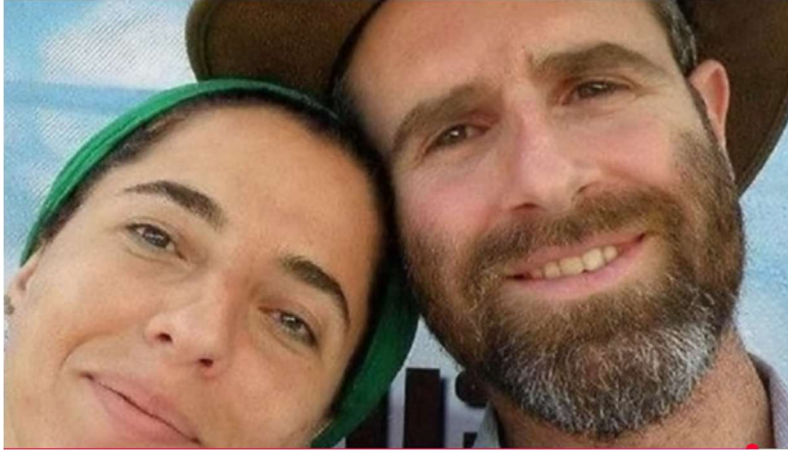
this deal is accused of not caring about the hostages. When in truth, it's precisely because we care so deeply that we need to ask the harder questions.

You know one of my Yom Kippur/Rosh Hashana things, I had Shaena put time control things on my phone for all of my different apps. So I can only spend like nine minutes on Facebook, which is just nine minutes too much. But you know I got embroiled in this exact fight and I'm glad that it shut me off because it was so heartbreaking to be accused of hating the families of the hostages, that's what someone accused me of. I would happily, happily give my life for any one of them. Anyways, this trance that it feels like the nation is falling into. And anyone who dares to speak of the potential catastrophe that may very well logically emerge from this deal is accused of not caring. You know, that's what it is because let's not forget. It was through this very kind of deal that Yahya Sinwar, himself was released, after of course Israel cured his brain cancer for free, and then released him. He was one of over a thousand terrorists freed for Gilad Shalit.

And now we must ask. How many new Sinwar's will emerge next week? How many fresh ranks will be filled in Gaza? Rebuilding the same terror machine that so many of our brave soldiers have already given their lives to dismantle? Anyone who dares point out the horrific trauma that happened to someone dear to me and I think many of you may know her also. You remember Kaye Wilson, she was known as Kaye, she changed her name to Tahl, but for those of you who don't remember the case, two young Christian women, lovers of Israel and the Jewish people, they went hiking in the Jerusalem Forest and they were brutally tortured with a knife by this jihadist terrorist for many hours. One was murdered, but the other one, Kaye, pretended to be dead and crawled for hours to safety. She was stabbed 18 times. Her murderer will be released. Here's what she posted. She wrote:

Palestinian who stabbed me 18 times and murdered my friend in front of me, is being released. UK tax payers have paid him a huge monthly salary. Israel is deporting him. Maybe @Keir_Starmer should take him in, cos UK gov recognized the state of Palestine @GBNEWS





There's also the murderer of the kind and loving Dafna Meir, I don't know if you remember this, but she was brutally murdered at the front door of her home with her children inside watching. She was stabbed in the stomach, and she grabbed a hold of the knife, pressing it deeper within her so that the terrorist Morad

Adais, may his name be wiped off the face of the earth, so that he wouldn't be able to pull it out and murder her children. He's getting out of prison. Noach Roth explained this in 2016 when the attack happened. This is what he wrote then. I'm going to read the whole thing. Maybe I shouldn't have put the whole thing, but here's what he wrote:

**Noah Roth**
January 19, 2016 · 🌐

I was shocked to discover that Dafna Meir's killer is 15 years old. He is 2 years older than my daughter, and a murderer. My wife made the passing comment, "He's 15 and his life is over." But here's the thing: It isn't.

Murad Adais lived in Yatta. Less than 5% of Yatta attain academic degrees. Average income is roughly 3,500 shekels per month, less than the Israeli minimum wage.

Beginning with his arrest, the Palestinian Authority will begin paying generous salaries to his family.

While in jail, Murad will receive state of the art healthcare, access to visitation, cable TV, and education in leading Israeli universities.

When Murad is inevitably released in a prisoner exchange sometime around 2036, he will be a 35 year old college graduate, likely the holder of a Master's Degree or PhD. He will receive funds earned while incarcerated and a lump sum as part of his prison release. He will return to his village a hero, and find that his family have become rich, local leaders. He will quickly receive marriage proposals from the elites of Palestinian society.

Murad Adais didn't end his life two days ago. He did the Palestinian equivalent of earning a full scholarship to Harvard. His life is now set. His decision to brutally murder a mother in front of her children was incited by a system that Israel created.

You know and everything he said is true. But it's only that the release is 11 years earlier than he thought. That's all he was off by. And it's just so infuriating and evil and unjust that I can cry. And you could maybe see me holding onto that and not being able to be just happy, knowing what's going on. And that's just one of the things, that was one of the national things. There are personal things, too. But that's what we're facing right now.

And anyone that dares point out that we read in the Torah portion this past Shabbat. I mean, how loud does HaShem need to speak to us. This Shabbat, HaShem said through the parsha to us:

Beware of making a covenant with the inhabitants of the land against which you are advancing, lest they be a snare in your midst.

• Exodus 34:12

That's what we're reading as we're signing the covenant. I mean, let's look just for a second at what the deal actually says. Jeremy says, "Do you want to go into this whole thing," and I think yes, you guys want to understand the intricacies of what's going on.

Here's what it says:

To secure the release of the living hostages, Israel will withdraw from half of the Gaza Strip. And then, with the return of the bodies, we'll withdraw completely, leaving Chamas in place to continue existing and ruling and rebuilding. The Rafiah Crossing will open wide, flooding Gaza with trucks full of goods, supplies, and inevitably weapons, all of which will help them reconstitute. Does anyone really believe that the piece of paper signed in Washington will convince Chamas to lay down their arms and relinquish control? Does anyone honestly believe that if Chamas refuses some Arab international force will suddenly descend into the tunnels and bring the terror regime to its knees?

Not only are we inviting a multinational force dominated by our adversaries – Qatar and Turkey to take effective control of our border, but we are entrusting them with our security. Because as Netanyahu, himself signed, even if Chamas violates the agreement, it will be this international force, not Israel, that will respond. And it's just distressing on so many levels. I could dedicate an entire Fellowship just unpacking it, but I don't want to. Because this isn't about politics or policy, it's about faith. And Sukkot comes to remind us that HaShem is in charge. Yes, we must speak truth as we see it, we must act with courage and responsibility, but our power is limited. So, so limited.

And the sukkah teaches us exactly that. It strips away the illusion of control and reminds us that there is One Who governs the winds, the nations, the leaders, and the headlines. And there are things unfolding now that we simply do not understand. I can't even confirm this, but I just want to read it to you. Jeremy, should I read this without confirmation? No? It's not confirmed. Ok, fine. Jeremy says I shouldn't read it, he's the commander. But the bottom line is, the Torah warns us not to enter into covenants with the evil.

The prophet Nechemiah actually spoke words that feel as if they were written for this very moment, showing the other side of things. Have you heard this prophecy? Have you guys heard about this prophecy from Nechemiah? It's been circulating here in Israel. Nechemiah, chapter 8, it's crazy, you got to know the Hebrew:

The whole community that returned from the captivity made booths and dwelt in the booths - the Israelites had not done so from the days of Joshua son of Nun to that day - and there was very great rejoicing.

• Nechemiah 8:17

faith.

Will this come to pass again? We don't yet know, we really don't know anything, maybe that's exactly the point. That's what Sukkot comes to teach us. Don't get lost in the past, don't get anxious about the future, dwell here, now, under the shade of

And once you really open your heart to this truth, you see it everywhere. You know looking forwards, backwards, you see it in the book of Kohelet, Ecclesiastes. Kohelet tells us that everything is hevel, it's the most common word in the book. And Rabbi Sacks points out it's translated to mean pointless, meaningless, futile, empty, vapor, smoke, vanity. But the primary meaning is breath. In the context in the book, it actually means a shallow breath. And this image, the image of a shallow breath captures the thin line between life and death.

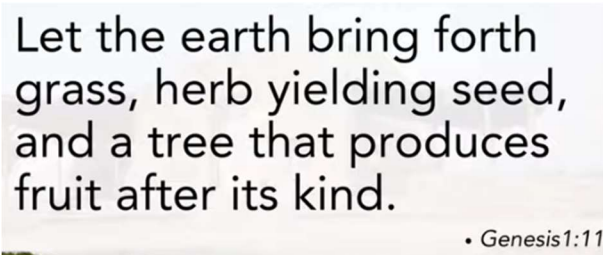
While the universe endures, human life is fleeting, a passing cloud, a breath of wind, that's what it says in our prayers. Rabbi Sacks goes on to explain that Kohelet is haunted by mortality, that every life ends unfinished, like Moses who never crossed the Jordan. You know, Jeremy beautifully taught, so did Tehila, you know after the high holy days, when we prayed to be inscribed in the Book of Life. Sukkot arrives and poses a deeper question. What is life? And what gives it meaning?

And Kohelet's answer to that is joy. Simcha, joy redeems life from the shadow of death. And it's found not in grand achievements, or lasting certainty, but in the moment. Joy is found in work, in love, in daily pleasures. Unlike happiness which depends more on circumstances, joy is an act of presence, a blessing of yom yom, like the Rav Hillel taught. True joy is gratitude for existence, itself. The breath that we take now. This fleeting moment that will never return, true joy transcends worry about the past or anxiety about the future and celebrates being alive right now. That's what it says in Kohelet. Vanities of vanities, chevel chevelim, hakol hevel. Vanity of vanities, everything is in vain. It's not cynicism. It's clarity, it's just true.

Shlomo Hamelech, at the height of his wisdom, King Solomon realizes that everything that is pursued as a means to an end – wealth, pleasure, honor, dissolves into vanity. Right? In other words, the Divine is not waiting for you at the destination. HaShem is in the doing. Holiness is hidden in the now, meaning it's in the awareness, it's when you're fully present in the act, itself. Our actions are not judged or even given meaning by their outcomes. The outcomes are out of our hands. The meaning comes from who we become through the performance of the actions.

Kohelet is the Torah's manual for mindfulness through emunah. It's not Buddhist detachment, and it's not this trendy push towards stoicism. It's divkut, to cleave to HaShem by fully engaging with the truth and the awareness that *ein ode milvado*. That HaShem's all encompassing eternity fills every moment. That's where the joy is. The recognition and the internalization of that.

And if we look closely, we can see this truth woven into the story of creation, itself. And what we're about to begin this week. I know we've spoken about this before, but you know when something is truly precious to your heart, it's only natural that it will resurface again and again, each time we're feeling a deeper level of meaning. So, Genesis, chapter 1, verse 11:



Let the earth bring forth
grass, herb yielding seed,
and a tree that produces
fruit after its kind.

• Genesis 1:11

But Rashi points out something remarkable. Why is the word *etz*, tree repeated twice. He explains *etz pri*...that the tree itself will taste like the fruit. The command was that the tree should taste like the truth. That is what an *etz pri* was supposed to be. But the Midrash

teaches, the earth disobeyed. It produced a tree that makes fruit, meaning that the bark lost the taste of the fruit. This is the first imperfection in creation. A spiritual sin, one could say, of the earth itself.

What does that mean? The tree is the process, the journey, the labor, the growth. The fruit is the result, the success and the goal and the completion. God's original vision was that the journey and the destination would taste the same. That Divine joy and Presence would be found, not just in the outcome, but in every step along the way. And when the earth separated the taste of the fruit from the tree, the world entered this duality. Work became toil and time became tension and we began living for results, instead of living in the journey. The journey was only justified by the destination. No longer was the journey the end in and of itself.

And so the world fell into this despair, this endless striving without satisfaction. And I really believe that is one of the primary messages of our times, really of our lives. That to heal that

primordial split. If we open our hearts, we hear HaShem telling us, “My beloved children, rejoice in your portion, be present in your labor. This is from HaShem.” The message is not to escape life, but to taste the fruit in the bark, to experience the sweetness of the Divine in every mundane act, every imperfect moment, every step of the way.

So when you eat, eat with awareness, that’s the Judean Diet. When you build, build with gratitude. When you pray, don’t necessarily just seek a result, just dwell in the Presence of HaShem that’s already there. This is the rectification, the tikkun of creation, to restore the taste of the fruit to the tree. To infuse the journey with joy, not just the arrival.

So when we started the Fellowship, we asked, “How can joy, and emotion be commanded?” And I believe that the answer that we’re learning here is that joy is not a spontaneous emotion, but it’s the result at least of a spiritual discipline. The Torah isn’t commanding us to feel something that we don’t, it’s commanding us to choose a perspective. To focus our mind and our heart on the blessings that are already present. To shift our awareness towards gratitude and trust in HaShem.

And you know the Chassidic sages, they taught that wherever a person’s thoughts are, that is where he is. So if your consciousness is in the future, you’re not alive now. If your heart is in the present moment, well that is where HaShem dwells with you, that’s where HaShem dwells within you. And so, my friends, we’re about to...I think we’re going to wind this Fellowship down. I want to have a Fellowship Connection to hear from you a little bit. We do have some time, but I just want to take a moment and take a breath together. I’m afraid that if I do, I’m going to cough a lot, but I am going to do that. (Ari takes a deep breath)

A deep breath because really, that’s really what Sukkot is all about, that’s what Kohelet is all about. That’s what Bereshith is all about. It’s about this moment, this breath, this awareness that life, the fleeting precious breath of being alive right now is in itself a great miracle. And so maybe that’s what this year, this holiday has been about for me, personally at least, and I hope for all of us. That even when joy feels far away, HaShem is showing us where we’ve stopped trusting. And in that clarity, in that seeing, there’s already healing and growth, and that’s a tremendous gift.

So my blessing to all of us from this little sukkah here in the hills of Judea is this:

May HaShem shelter you in His Sukkah of faith. May He illuminate your darkness with His light. May He heal your wounds, strengthen your heart, and renew your joy. May He return the captives, comfort the broken, and protect all who stand for truth and goodness. And bless us

with the courage to trust, the clarity to see His Hand in everything, and the joy that comes from knowing in our heads, and infusing into our hearts that there's nothing other than Him. And may we all Jews and the righteous of the nations, merit to sit together, not through a screen, but right here in the hills of Judea, on the outskirts of a rebuilt Jerusalem under the rebuilt sukkah of David where the nations come up, where the world is healed, and where the light of HaShem fills every corner of creation.

And so, allow me to bless you with the blessing of Aaron the High Priest, from here, from the sukkah here in the hills of Judea.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

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

