

Session 246

Bereshit – The Year We Have All Been Waiting For

19 October 2025

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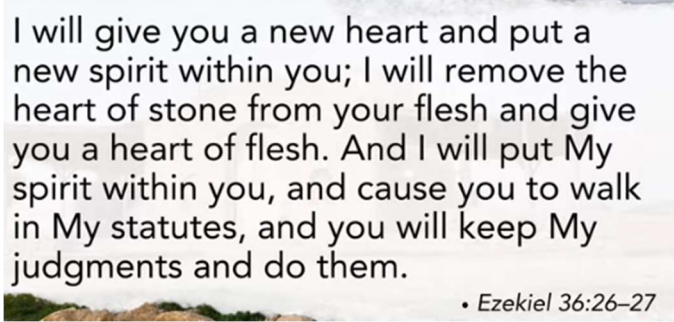
Jeremy

Shalom everybody, great to see you! It is lovely to see you, I'm glad the technicals are all set up here, right. It's just awesome. We are starting a new year together, I hope the holidays we experienced together were amazing for you. You know, it's not like just a one night's New Year's resolution and party. It's a process. It's like life almost stops and forces us to focus inward for about a month...more. And so, Shanah Tovah. It's so good to be together here. There is no way I would rather kick off...really the first week of the year. This really is the first week of the new year. It's like, finally we started off on Sunday, we have a whole week ahead of us without a break in the middle for a Shabbat. It's just like, wow, we are starting anew.

And this is our first Fellowship of the New Year. Last week was the most emotional week in Israel that I've ever experienced. It's like we started the Torah from the beginning, everything is new, but it feels like something even deeper. It really feels like a new beginning for all of Israel. If the Bible were being written today, it feels like the hostages have come home, there's a pause in this stage of the war has come to an end, at least for right now, and it's the end of a chapter. And this week we're literally starting a new chapter in life. And it's a new chapter in Israel, and the truth is, I don't have any idea how this chapter is going to play out. No one does, and anyone who says he knows what the next month is going to look like, their words need to be taken, not with a grain of salt, but with like a bucket of salt. If there's one thing that we've learned in the last two years in Israel, is that Israel is filled with surprises. You have no idea what beepers might blow up and whatever miracles might manifest.

The last two years, this last chapter we saw miracles. We saw tragedies, we saw glorious times, we experienced surprise after surprise. And this season, it's bringing something new with it. And I want to talk about that. There's a new spirit in Israel and I'm really excited to see this new chapter and see what it has in store. There is something that is undeniable, it's a shift that's happening within Israel. The nation of Israel and the Land of Israel is experiencing an unprecedented spiritual revival. It's a movement that's growing throughout the people in the Land, it isn't everyone yet, but there is a shift that's happening and it's a movement that's slowly growing. The return of the hostages, it's unleashed a spirit in the Land, and the hostages themselves, through their testimonies and the examples of who they are, they're spreading a fire that is catching all around the country.

In my wildest dreams, I never thought this prophecy would unfold in this way, but in the media in Israel, on social media, you see it everywhere. Ezekiel chapter 36 talks about after the people of Israel come back to the Land, verse 26 and 27:



I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

• Ezekiel 36:26–27

I never thought that the war itself, the hostages, and all the chaos of the last two years would somehow bring God's spirit into the hearts of the people of Israel, but it says that God will remove the heart of stone and give us a new heart of flesh.

And it's like the last two years, we were on the operating table and getting open heart surgery. There's no other way to explain it. And now, for the first time, Israel's heart is beating in a new way. We're seeing a new spirit that's being given to the people of Israel. If I could, I would share a hundred videos from the hostages that have come home. Because each one of them, remarkable people, they were each chosen, hand-picked to bring a light to Israel that only they could. And all of Israel was praying for them, all of Israel was thinking about them, all of Israel was waiting for them. They come home and everyone is like tuned in. What are they going to say?

And they've said the most remarkable things. And so, this is a video that I want to share now. It's of a hostage, his name is Eliya Cohen. He was a hostage for 505 days. And now he's had time to regain weight and he's now speaking about his experience living in hell on earth. And he talks about how every morning he would pretend to put tefillin on, phylacteries, on his head and on his arm. He would have conversations with God, and while he was held captive, he honored Shabbat, and he lived in a dialogue with God and eventually he brought other people, being held with him back to prayer and back to God. Hostages that found God in the darkest place. You can't believe it. Check out this testimony from Eliya Cohen.



I would put on tefillin in order, without tefillin physically. Just blindly act out how I wrap the tefillin on my arm and place it on my head. And I would act out putting on my kippa and my prayer shawl. I would say all the morning blessings. I would talk and negotiate a lot with God. Although you shouldn't put conditions on God, but I would say to him a lot, "God if you help me in this way or that way, I'll add to my prayer in this way." In the end, I had nothing to offer God other than my prayer and my deeds. Until a certain point one of my friends came and said to me, "I don't know how to pray. Maybe you could let me join you in prayer. If you pray out loud, I'll join you." Every day we started praying together. Then suddenly everyone joined us. I found myself everyday saying the morning blessings for everyone. I would make Kiddush and sanctify the Sabbath every Friday. With water only. There was nothing else.

Jeremy

What I find most remarkable about that video is that no one can look at Elijah and say, "Oh, he's Orthodox." His entire arm is covered in tattoos, he's not wearing a kippah or a hat. And what's happening is that people in Israel are seeing that a Jew can have tattoos and still live in a dialogue with God in the darkest place in the world. And the hostages are changing the way people see themselves, changing people's relationships with God and the Torah. Even if they don't look Orthodox, they can still pray, they can still have a relationship with the Creator.

In Israel everything has boxes. You have a certain kind of head covering. And if you have that head covering, that means you're associated with this political party. It's like all of a sudden, all of those paradigms are being shifted. The hostages coming home are opening a spiritual door for the nation that no one else could. And this hungry nation, seeking understanding, meaning, reality, after October 7th and the last two years of war is walking through the door that these hostages are opening in the thousands.

And so, this new chapter is going to be something different. Israel will never be the same again. And with that idea of hope, with what's in the air, I want to kick off this year with a prayer that only our Fellowship can pull together from around the world and send it off. And so, it is so unique and there have been a lot of prayers that have been said for Israel in the last two years, but I have never seen, experienced, or heard of anything like our Fellowship. Just people from Switzerland, and Germany, and South Africa, and Europe, and all across the United States, and Canada. I look at the chats and I see the people, it's just remarkable. And so what an opportunity to bring all these nations together in prayer. And so, it's truly a highlight in my life. And so, with one heart, let's give it up.

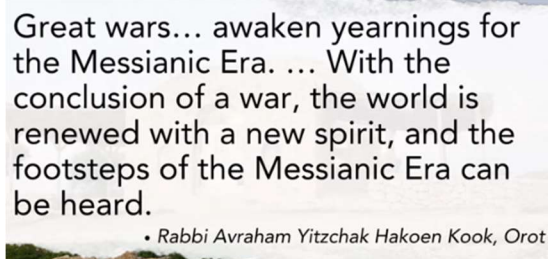
HaShem, Master of the world, Master of all worlds, as we begin this new year together, we turn our hearts to You. We're starting again, learning Your Torah, walking Your path. And we've gathered here together as one family, from every corner of the earth. Every Sunday this Fellowship comes together and brings to life the vision You gave to the prophets of Israel. A people assembled from many nations, different backgrounds, different cultures, different languages, diverse opinions, and yet, all of us are united with one heart. A heart that beats with love for You, for Your people, and for Your Land. Thank You, HaShem, for choosing us, thank You for allowing us to reflect Your light in this generation. For allowing us to model Your ways for the world to see. It feels as if we are entering into a new chapter of history. Show us the way and what we are called to do to serve You in these times. We thank You for the countless blessings in our life and for bringing us together. Guide us, HaShem, show us the next step we are meant to take as individuals and as a Fellowship. Thank You for everything that You've done for us. May we bring more peace, more holiness, more unity into Your world. Thank You for hearing our prayers, thank You for doing what seemed impossible. To return our hostages home, surrounded by darkness, You have made Your light shine even brighter. May Israel continue to rise in strength and faith and may all who stand with You and Your people grow stronger in spirit and courage and in love. And may this year be a rebuilding for Israel and for the nations and for all of us. May we walk together toward the redemption that is unfolding before our eyes. Amen.

All right my friends, there is something that I take a lot of comfort with in this war. Israel has been through such a hard time. And we've been attacked on so many fronts – attacked by the media, attacked by European countries, with Canada, and Australia, and South Africa is suing us in the International Criminal Court. And we felt like people turned their backs on us, but there is a silver lining that I can clearly see. A spice cart that I can truly take comfort in. I mentioned it just a few minutes ago, that there's something happening in Israel that's taken us a step closer. But there's something even more.

When you think about war and the chaos that war creates, you would imagine for example after WWI or II, the world would just spiral out of control into oblivion. People would destroy each other and there would just be total chaos. But it seems like each war has in some ways served as a catapult to propel the world toward redemption. Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakoen Kook, the first chief rabbi of Israel wrote these ideas with Divine inspiration. Remember, Rav Kook died before the Holocaust, before the establishment of the State of Israel, but somehow, he was given a vision and an understanding of how the future of Israel would unfold and how war would have the power to push us toward Mashiach. I mean, here's a direct quote:

“When there’s a great war in the world, the power of Mashiach awakens. The time of the song bird has come. The weeding away of tyrants, Master of Wars, the Sower of Righteousness, who causes salvation to sprout, causes a new light to shine upon Zion.”

In his book, Orot, he writes on the purpose of war in relation to the historical process of redemption. Here’s the quote:



Great wars... awaken yearnings for the Messianic Era. ... With the conclusion of a war, the world is renewed with a new spirit, and the footsteps of the Messianic Era can be heard.

• Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Hakoen Kook, Orot

And when I think about the fact that he wrote that before the Holocaust, before the revival of the State of Israel, the witness that he was able to declare, saying, “When a huge war comes, that’s only going to bring us closer...” I mean, the State of Israel, the most giant step toward the Messianic

era, after a World War. It’s like the largest war ever waged against the people of Israel in history. And after that, somehow this resurrection of a people and our Land came to be.

And when you think Israel would just whither away and spiral into nothingness, Israel experienced a rebirth like no other nation on earth. And now, it appears that the same power of Mashiach is being awakened in the Land of Israel. And so, with that hopeful introduction, I want to bring on Ari Abramowitz. He absolutely has Torah to share and a perspective to share. And I feel as though Ari and I because we are partners in the Arugot Farm, in the Fellowship, we just see the world in a unique way from the mountains of Judea. And I just want him to share his perspective with us today. So, Ari, come on.

Ari

Hello! Good to see you guys. Shalom, shalom. You know, Jeremy and I we prepare for this, we switch off, we alternate. One week, he’s the driver and I come in and share an idea, and then he does it the other week. But I have to tell you, we don’t coordinate, we don’t like say, “I’m going to talk about this, you talk about that.” And then, out of all of the things in the world we could address, the same thing is speaking to our hearts, which is cool. It’s like really, in some ways it’s like really a confirmation because you guys know that I’ve got my ups and downs. We all have our ups and downs, all of us. And one of the many things I love so much about this Fellowship is the degree that we share it all with each other. The ups, the downs, the struggles, the blessings, everything. We pray for each other, we mourn with each other, we celebrate with each other, we put it all on the line with each other.

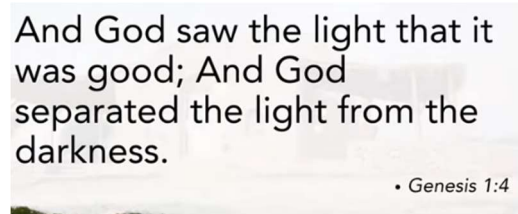
And as my wife Shaena knows very well, there are times when I look around, I don’t know if this resonates with you, but I look around and what I see everywhere is pain. It’s hard to describe,

but I can almost feel it on people's faces. I don't always know their stories, or what they're going through, but I sense the weight they're carrying. And I wouldn't trade that away. It's become a really important part of my journey, it's almost as if, whenever I start getting too caught up with myself, too focused on my own struggles and my own distractions, HaShem opens my eyes to the pain of others. He reminds me of how much every soul is carrying, each in their own way. And somehow that awareness doesn't pull me down. I feel like it softens me. It awakens a deeper, more genuine sense of empathy and compassion that feels less like an emotion, and sometimes even more like a calling.

Anyways, over these past few months, I don't even know a few months, month, I would say the past month or so, I found myself looking at the world in a light through a very particular lens. The prism of light and darkness. I think it's probably come out in a lot of the Fellowship ideas that I've been sharing. And I was actually hesitating a little bit to share with you what I'm about to share because I wasn't really sure I could explain it or do it justice. But after what I experienced over the last week, over this last Shabbat and really over the past few days, I felt like I had to share it with you, even if I can't fully put it into words because that's what we do here. That's what this Fellowship is about, opening our hearts to each other. Not just our thoughts, but our hearts. Sometimes it's not all thrashed out and right now that's what's alive in my heart. So it would feel inauthentic not to share it with you.

Anyways, it's hard to describe because when I speak of light and darkness, I don't mean the physical kind. Not the light our eyes perceive or the absence of it. I'm talking about something deeper, a different kind of light altogether. I'm talking about the light in this week's Torah portion when God said on day one, "Let there be light." The Torah was not talking about the light of the sun, the moon, or the stars. Those weren't created until day four. This was something altogether different. This was what the sages call the hidden light, the *ohr ha'ganuz*. It was a light of consciousness, a Divine illumination through which Adam could see from one end of the world to the other. It was a light of clarity, connection, and truth, the light through which the soul sees reality as it truly is. Before it became veiled behind the filters and the shadows and the confusion and the multiplicity and the illusions of this world.

And then, the Torah tells us HaShem hid that light away.



And God saw the light that it was good; And God separated the light from the darkness.

• Genesis 1:4

Our sages teach that He hid it away for the righteous in the future. For the time when the world will be ready to receive it again. But traces of that light, echoes of it, still shine in the world. They shine in the eyes of a person doing an act of *chesed*, an act of kindness, in a

moment of pure prayer, and I feel it in my children's laughter, in tears of compassion, in the courage to hold onto faith in the midst of darkness. And when I talk about seeing light and darkness, that is what I mean. I'm talking about catching glimpses of that original, Divine light, the ohr ha'ganuz, that still flickers beneath the surface of everything.

And maybe that's our deepest mission. Not to create light out of nowhere, but to uncover the light that was there from the very beginning. The light that never truly went away, but only became hidden. Sometimes even in the deepest darkness, in the pain, in the confusion, in the heartbreak, we can still feel its glow. It's not visible to the eyes, but it can be sensed, it can be experienced, it can be experienced by the soul. And when you see that light, even for a moment, you realize that the darkness was never absolute. That HaShem's Presence was there all along, hidden within it. And maybe that's what it means to be children of that first light. To carry within us the capacity to reveal it again. To find sparks of it in one another's eyes, in acts of kindness, in faith that refuses to surrender to despair. To lives that draw that light, the ohr ha'ganuz, back into the world. That's the light I'm talking about. And I truly believe that is the very light Isaiah was speaking about when he said in chapter 42:

I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness, I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and make you a covenant for the people and a light for the nations.
• Isaiah 42:6

He doesn't mean a lamp, he doesn't mean physical light. There's a deeper light, clearly.

Or again, when HaShem entrusts Israel with this sacred mission in chapter 49:

It is too small a thing for you to be My servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the nations, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.
• Isaiah 49:6

It's a light of salvation.

In Chapter 60:

Nations will walk by your light, and kings by the brightness of your rising.
• Isaiah 60:3

That's the light. The prophets clearly weren't talking about physical illumination. You can't measure it by lumens or wavelengths, but light of the soul, a light of Divine consciousness, of moral clarity and spiritual awakening. It's the radiance of God's Presence, shining through human hearts.

And the great paradox, the irony, is that this transcendent, Divine light has never been clearer to me than in these recent months precisely because of the contrast with the darkness that surrounds us. The deeper the shadows grow, the more congeals that darkness, the more this hidden light feels like it's coming into focus. Not only here in Israel, but really throughout the entire world.

And I want to share with you, I know what Jeremy shared with you. I'm happy it's not the same one. There's so many to share from. I want to share with you a living example, a living breathing embodiment of this light. It's the testimony of Omer Shem Tov who was taken hostage at the Nova Music Festival. He's from Herzliya and he was a DJ there on Simchat Torah. And I emphasize that because his story is one of many reminders of something I say often. What Jeremy said earlier, it's a mistake, it's a tragedy, to dismiss non-observant Jews, especially here in the Land of Israel, as secular or godless. They're anything but. The flame of holiness within them is real and it's alive and sometimes it burns openly and brightly, sometimes it rests quietly like an ember waiting to be fanned, but it is always there.

And when I heard Omer's words, when I watched his face and I felt his sincerity, I saw that flame bursting into light. And it wasn't just that he was shining a light to the world, he was shining a light to me, he moved me to tears, he inspired me to change my life, my communication, my dialogue with HaShem, that is the most precious in my life, has been strongly influenced by this tattooed, secular godless Israeli.

And you know when I watched it in that moment, I knew that I was witnessing the light that Isaiah was speaking of, shining through his soul. Who had walked through darkness and had come out radiant with faith. And I want you to see it too because it's a glimpse of what most of the world will never see. Tabitha and I spent a lot of time earlier. We were translating and subtitling it into English so that all of you, so our Fellowship family could witness it with your own eyes.

So here he is, sitting in the sukkah, surrounded by his friends and family, sharing his heart. This is Omer Shem Tov. And this is what oh ha'ganuz looks like when it shines through a human being.



I had the opportunity to speak to God a lot during my captivity. And after Itay left, immediately they cast me deep underground into a tunnel, 40 meters underground. I didn't have room to stand and I wasn't able to lift my arms from side to side. It was total pitch darkness. And when I say total darkness, you couldn't see anything. Nothing at all. It was from within that total pitch darkness that I found the most light. I don't know why or how. I think it was the prayers that were sent for me. Prayers, energy, whatever you want to call it, it doesn't matter. I felt them. I felt them as strongly as you could imagine.

And every night before falling asleep, I had five minutes where I talked to God. When I tell the story, I try to explain that usually when people talk to God they ask for something from God. I want a bigger house, a bigger garden. I want a car, I want health. But nobody asks Him what's with Him. So I would start by asking Him, HaShem, how are You? Father, how are You? How was Your day? Do You need anything? If you need, please tell me, and I will do it. And then I would say, "Thank You, thank You for everything I have. Thank You for the air, thank You for the food on my plate, even if it was half a piece of bread today. Thank You for everything, for everything, for everything, for everything that I have, and for everything that I don't." And then I would request a bigger car.

What I can say is that if there is something that I "miss" from my captivity, it was the way I was able to speak to HaShem. Until this day, I tried to do this, and there were few times that I'm able to feel Him like I felt Him there with me. I would feel Him, truly feel Him. Because there I would speak to Him and see Him there with me. And then suddenly you feel your heart expanding and a smile stretching across your face, in the middle of darkness, in the middle of nothing. There is nothing around you what could be causing you to be happy and you feel like this massive light...this massive light and baruch HaShem, may God be blessed, baruch HaShem. (end of video)

Ari

I mean, just take a moment, I see all the hearts popping up and exploding all over the place. How can they not? Right? Literally it's happening with emojis, it's happening inside of us, I mean, just... "How are You, HaShem, what can I do for You, HaShem?" I mean, just let that sink in for a second. What we just witnessed wasn't only a story, it was a revelation of light from within the darkness. From within the hiddenness of the hiddenness. That's another video. Maybe we'll show you that next week. That's the ohr ha'ganuz, hidden light shining through a soul that refused to let the darkness define him.

And as I said, we see that light at the very beginning in Bereshit, the opening words of creation. But when your eyes are opened to it, you know I was seeing it. I didn't want to take up Jeremy's entire Fellowship, but I was seeing it all throughout the portion of Noach also. I'll share more of that with you next week. You start to realize that this isn't just an early motif. It is perhaps the greatest theme of the entire Torah. Because on the deepest level, it's the purpose of Creation, itself. To reveal that hidden, Divine light within every corner of existence. Particularly those corners in which it is the most hidden.

This past Shabbat, we had here at the Farm, a very holy soul named Malachi. He's a dear friend, and he shared something with me that changed the way I see the entire story of humanity. He explained that when Adam and Eve were sent from the Garden, most people imagine it as an expulsion, as though they were cast out, banished from Paradise, rejected from God's Presence. However...however my friend Malachi taught me, that is not what the Torah actually says. In chapter 3, it is written:

And Hashem sent out man
from the Garden of Eden.

• Genesis 3:23

It doesn't say he was expelled, it says he was sent. And the Hebrew word, Slichut, it means "an emissary, a mission, a Divine sending forth, an emissary with a purpose." Adam wasn't cast away by God, he was

commissioned by God. He was sent into the world, into its confusion, and its shadows and its pain to gather the sparks of light that had fallen, to raise them back up and to reveal God's hidden Presence within the very darkness that his own actions had created. And in that sense, Adam's mission became our mission, the mission of Israel, the mission of all who seek to bring God's light into the world. To find holiness where others only see chaos. To see Divine orchestration where others see randomness. And to lift the sparks, one act of faith, one act of love, one act of courage at a time. Even just perspective, even just seeing it, witnessing it, and internalizing it into your heart changes the fabric of reality. I'm telling you it's true.

And that my friends is our mission. We're not here just to escape the darkness, we're here to transform it, to enter into the broken places of the world through love and faith and courage and kindness and to reveal the Divine light that has been waiting there all along. Because every time we see God's Presence where it seems the most hidden, every time we sense His orchestration in what appears to be chaos and randomness, every time we recognize His guiding Hand behind what looks like just confusion and chaos and pain, we're uncovering the hidden light of creation. And that is how we raise the sparks. That's how we fulfill the mission that began with Adam, that was renewed through Abraham and that lives on in the people of Israel and in all who love HaShem. Every act of faith in the midst of this doubt, those are moments that draw the hidden light into the world.

And perhaps that's why HaShem placed us in this generation, a generation that has seen such depths of pain, but also such unimaginable heroism and unity in faith. Because the darker the night, the brighter even a small flame can shine. And when those flames join together, the light of Israel and the light of all who love HaShem, the darkness itself becomes the vessel through which His glory is revealed.

So I bless us all, my friends, that we may be among those who see that light, who reveal it, and who live by it. May we learn to recognize HaShem's Presence precisely where it feels the most concealed. May we train our eyes and our hearts to see His orchestration, even in the storms and to find His goodness hidden in the very places we least expect it. May we walk through the darkness without fear, knowing that the Shekinah, the Divine Presence, walks beside us. And may the day soon come when that light no longer flickers in secret where we have to find it out and elevate it spark by spark, but it shines openly from Zion to the ends of the earth. When HaShem will be your everlasting light and your days of mourning will come to an end. Amen. May it be soon for Israel and for all of us, my friends. Shavua tov.

Jeremy

All right, thank you so much, Ari, that was just beautiful. There are just so many stories. And everyone in Israel are watching these videos of these hostages. You can only imagine what an effect it's having on people. And that video in particular, so touching. He speaks with such grace and favor, you can't help but like him, a lot! And he doesn't sound like someone who experienced a trauma and now it's like this unstable or fanatic. He just experienced light in the darkness and he's sharing his testimony with Israel now. And it's touching people's hearts in Israel and around the world.

And so, I want to share another video with you. It captures a little bit of what Israel is experiencing. And you'll never see this on the mainstream media, but I think it's critical that you really understand the heart of Israel here. This is a video at the Nova Festival scene, the day the hostages were coming back. Check this out:



Mass prayer at the site of the worst massacre on October 7th. And on the Hebrew calendar, it came out exactly two years since the hostages that were taken into captivity. The day they came home, the last day of Sukkot is called Hoshana Rabbah, the Great Salvation. And the day's called the Great Salvation because it's the day that all the prayers of the entire season are answered. And incredibly, the answer to all our prayers, that the hostages would be returned, was answered exactly on that day. And it would be one thing if the people gathered at the Nova Music Festival and sang songs and

held hands. The fact that they're praying, singing, dancing, with the four species, the lulav, and etrog, the same species the people of Israel have been praying with on Hoshana Rabbah on Sukkot for more than 3,000 years, has a power like...it just can't be replicated by any other nation on earth.

What has kept the Jewish people, Jewish? What has connected us to God after centuries and millennia? What kept us connected? It was our commitment to the Torah. And seeing that commitment to the Torah align, alive with energetic dance and praise, Hallel, the power of that scene at the worst massacre during October 7th is just mind-blowing. But that's what Israel is doing.

And this is a spiritual battle. Everything in life is a spiritual battle. If you have inner strength, mental fortitude, emotional strength, a deep connection to the source, Jewish history is proof. You can overcome impossible odds. And watching the people of Israel after two years of war, singing and dancing and praising God with Hallel, while waving the ancient command of the Torah, to wave the lulav and etrog, it felt like there was confirmation that Israel is going to win this war, no matter what.

And now, I want to invite my lovely, incredible wife, Tehila Gimpel to share some of her thoughts and insights with the Fellowship on the most emotional week Israel has ever experienced in our history. It's just been an unprecedented time. And Tehila and I were doing some shopping together, right before Simchat Torah. And the hostages were being released as we were in the super market. And there was a big scream with live news streaming. And we saw the first hostages being released and handed over into Israeli hands. And in the middle of the super market, in front of the teller and anyone else that was there, my dear wife burst out crying, just watching the news. And the entire day we were just watching the news unfold. And I remember Tehila saying, for the first time in two years, she could breathe again. And so, it's just been an unbelievable time and I want her to tell you also about a really unprecedented date night that we had last week. So, I'm going to pass it over to Tehila.

Tehila

I snuck into the screen like Cal and Ardelle cause I wanted to see everyone so badly. So wonderful to see you guys. It's a strange way to describe our week last week as a date night, Jeremy. I don't know if I would exactly call it that. So, I wanted to share with you guys an experience...I feel like I need to give testimony to what I saw last week, to what we experienced last week because it was so powerful, I feel I just need...you guys know me already. I usually come with my Bible, ready to say this thing about the Torah portion and that thing about the

Torah portion and this week I just feel like I need to share my heart and unburden like this testimony of what I saw and experienced and felt.



On Wednesday night, Jeremy and I went to the funeral of Daniel Perez, who was a tank commander, whose body was returned in this last deal. And he was a tank commander that on October 7th was with his team, with Itay and Tomer and with Matan, and they were one tank, right in front of that wall of Gaza, just standing in front of these hordes of barbarians bursting through and they didn't run away and they just fought till their very, very last strength.

Daniel and Itay and Tomer were killed. And Matan was taken captive. And Daniel's body and Itay's body were also taken captive. And Daniel's family for more than a hundred days didn't even know what happened to him. They thought that he was possibly captured by the Chamas and eventually found out that he had been killed because they found a shirt with his blood.

And so, if you guys can believe such a thing, we actually went to the 2nd funeral of the same person. That's not something that happens to you every day, you go to somebody's second funeral because they didn't know if they were ever going to get Daniel's body back, so they buried his shirt with his blood. They did the whole funeral with all the eulogies, and then they had to open up his grave when they got his body back, and do the whole funeral all over again. So that was what we were doing on Wednesday night.

And we get to this funeral of this unbelievably heroic boy, only 22 years old who fought to be a combat soldier because he had an injury and they didn't want to even accept him in combat. He had to fight to be in combat. And then just went up against thousands of terrorists that were just bursting through Gaza, killed dozens of terrorists, saved hundreds of lives. So we're at this funeral, and Jeremy and I are just packed in there with thousands of people coming to the second funeral and out of nowhere shows up Matan, who had just two days ago, two days earlier been freed from two years in Gaza. And I recognized him because I had seen the video of him being released and I see him walk up to the front of the funeral.

And it's like, thousands of people there in the cemetery, you just hear.... "huhhh," this gasp of so many people at the same time because you can't believe that this person...he's so pale, and he's so emaciated, that he's standing there to give honor to his commander. And then we were there...imagine three hours of eulogies, back-to-back. We're all just standing in the cemetery, in

the military cemetery, three hours of the most unbelievable eulogies from the President, and army generals, and his friends.

And then, it's three hours, and it felt almost like nobody wanted it to end. His sister actually said, she said, "I don't want this funeral to end," like if you could say such a thing. I don't want a funeral to end, who wouldn't want a funeral to end? I don't want the funeral to end because then it's like, it's over, it's real. And it was like no one wanted this funeral to end. For just three hours of talking about this just unbelievable hero. And then, his father gets up and he says, "Listen. It's 11:00 at night. We've been here for three hours, I'm going to give the last eulogy, and then we're going to go home."

And out of nowhere, and this was so unexpected, Matan jumps up onto the stage, whispers into Rav Doron, Daniel's father's ear, and takes the microphone and starts speaking. And no one can believe this. We're like, "What is happening? Somebody who was 48 hours out of two years in Gaza has the strength to come and speak?" So I want to share this with you and then share with you guys what we felt after this. I want to share with you guys a small clip. He spoke for a while, but just a small clip of what he said.



Matan

I can't believe I even made it here. This is the least I could do for Daniel and the whole unit. I'm sure God is watching over them now, and that they're okay, strengthening me from above. And we'll keep fighting for Itay Chen as well, until he comes back. I'm ready to go into Gaza right now to bring him back. Daniel Perez, may his memory be blessed. He's someone to

look up to, truly. He's the kind of person that anyone who had the privilege to know him understands. He's a symbol, simply a symbol of this nation. He is a hero of Israel, together with the whole unit. I want to thank everyone who came to honour this moment and my commander, who will always be my commander until the day I die. I really want to thank everyone, truly. I'm lost for words. This dear family of Daniel, I'll walk with them for the rest of my life, all my life. I'm not leaving you for a moment. He'll always be with me, everywhere I go, he's always there with me. On the 7th of October, they were the central figures, truly. They did everything, I cannot explain what happened there. I'm proud that we killed terrorists and protected the State of Israel, together under the command of Daniel Perez, who was truly incredible. He was a champion and someone to admire. You'll walk with me until my last day, I promise you. And with God's help, also in the next world, together with Itay Chen, may his

memory be blessed, and Tomer Leibovitz, may his memory be blessed, they are my heroes. I'm a little weak, but it will be okay. He's my hero, truly. He's my commander and the commander of all the people of Israel. It's a privilege for us, it's our duty to remember him always. I want to say that the nation of Israel has been through a terrible upheaval, but together we'll get through it and strengthen our families. Am Yisrael Chai forever. May the memory of Daniel Perez, the unit, all the soldiers who fought, and the hostages, those with us and those not with us, be blessed. And with God's help, together we'll destroy terror, and we'll win. Thank you al very much. (end of video)

Tehila

Is that unbelievable? Try to imagine that it's a funeral and thousands of people burst into uproarious applause, in a funeral! And people just could not stop applauding this. And there's a few things there that were so remarkable. I think I emptied the contents of my face into my sweater at that moment because it's just like holding my...I was holding my head, I didn't feel like I could hold my own head up. When he says to Daniel's family, "I'm going to walk with you, I'm going to take care of you for the rest of our lives," he's a person that everybody, every single one of us should be taking care of for the rest of his life. He's not two days out of Gaza and saying that he wants to take care of them.

And then, when he says, their other friend, Itay is still held in Gaza, and he says, "I would go in right now. I would go in right now to Gaza to go and get him, myself." He actually said to his commander, the first thing he said when he was released was like, "I want to get better and go right back into combat." Like I'm ready to keep on fighting. And he was such a remarkable young man and you know, when we left the funeral, Jeremy and I looked at each other and we were just like, "What did we just witness? What just happened?" And it took me time, I'm trying to process, what did I just see?

And then what struck me was that it was as if the concentrate, like the most intense essence of the courage of the fallen was being represented in Daniel. Like the willingness to run forward to your most certain death to save others and the courage of the living. People have the unbelievable strength to go on and to cling to life and to love life and hold on to the sanctity of life, even in the tunnels of Gaza for two years and hold on to their godly image and not forget who they are and what they are. It was like the concentrated essence of that was represented in that moment in Matan and as Matan is standing over the grave of Daniel, it was like an atomic bomb of the meeting of the essence of the essence of the heroism of the fallen and the heroism of the living of these modern heroes of this era that we're living in. I felt as if a portal between this world and the world to come just opened up and for a moment I felt like I was in a

revelation. I said, "I don't know what this is, but something opened up." It felt like heaven opened up and there was this meeting for just a moment of this incredible essence.

And then it struck me, that really is what makes Israel so unique. There are nations, there are peoples, there are cultures that have tremendous self-sacrifice. We can say a lot of things about Chamas and their evil. But what's theirs is theirs. They are willing to sacrifice their lives and give up their lives for what they think is being called of them, what they think is right, what they think is being told to them by Allah.

And there are cultures in the world that love life that cling to life, that want to have the joys of life and the pleasures of life and the consumerism of life, and people will pay a lot of money for every supplement and every drug just to hold on to a bit of life. I think what's so unique about Israel, is that Israel loves life. If you come to Israel, even in the worst days of the war, you'll see people getting married, and being happy, and having children, and children running around, and there's joy, even in the darkest, darkest days. There's always a love of life, not giving up on the actual goodness of life.

But at the same time, a willingness that we've seen to run, not walk, to run toward self-sacrifice, losing limbs, losing life, to help others, to save others, to save lives. And we see it again and again and again. And you know, a culture that's willing to die and sacrifice their lives...ok, but if you don't really value life, does that really mean anything? Is that really so valuable? Is that something to admire? Israel loves life so much and with all of that love, there are people like Daniel who are willing to run...run to give up their life to save others. And it was like this meeting of that love of life and the courage and self-sacrifice that was so moving.

And it made me think about we're now starting...I can't talk to you guys without going a little bit biblical. We just started the book of Genesis, and that really is the essence of the beginning of God's message to us because there's the Tree of Life, loving life, God makes man in the image of God, the sanctity of life. But then there's that knowledge of good and evil. Like once evil comes into the world, you will surely die. Death will come. Once evil comes into the world, death is sure to follow. And it's like there's this energy of clinging to life, and this force of death that comes into the world in the beginning of Genesis.

And I think that the book of Genesis is that struggle, this book that we're now going to be studying together once again in this season, is really about that struggle of when we cling to life and when do we sacrifice. We're going to see it with Avraham being willing to sacrifice his son, with arguing with God, to cling to life, even of the Sodomites, like that's going to be the struggle of this book. And the book of Genesis eventually culminates in Judah's willing to sacrifice

himself to save Benjamin. And Joseph saying to his brothers, “Don’t worry, God had a plan, like I suffered, I was in captivity, but it was all to save lives. It was to prevent a famine, it was all for good.” And I think that is the unique strength of Israel that we’re seeing come out right now. And we should just merit to be worthy of these heroes. Bye, guys.

Jeremy

Thank you, Tehila, that was of course, a beautiful Torah. I want to merit to be your husband, you’re so good, that’s just too good. Public service announcement. All of the women tonight, the Women of Valor, live with Tehila is going to be at 7:45 P.M. It’s starting 15 minutes early tonight and I know that Tehila has lined up all star guests. Every guest she’s hosted has been absolutely beautiful and a real addition to the learning you all are doing together. It’s really brought the biblical heroines to life and you don’t want to miss out tonight because Tabitha is going to make a cameo, an appearance, and that is exciting for our Fellowship members.

And so, Tehila just told you about our experience at the funeral of Daniel Perez, of blessed memory. I wanted so badly to express what it’s like for me, this life in the Land of Israel. But really it’s ineffable, it’s beyond words. And that’s why the thousands of people that attended the funeral just erupted in applause. When the hostage, Matan, finished speaking, his knees were shaking because he was so weak and no one has ever seen anything like that before. They needed to express the emotions they were feeling and the energy they encountered was so overwhelming. And it just came out in a thunderous applause. I don’t think that there’s ever been a funeral in Jerusalem where the people attending the funeral spontaneously erupt with thousands of people, thunderous rounds of applause. It was just truly awesome.

And what I think about, when I was driving home, there are people that are living their lives around the world, and they’re pretty removed from reality. They get their drama or their excitement or their emotional jolts from Hollywood or Netflix or Amazon. And just living a life in Israel, connecting it to life in Israel, it’s more than any movie director or producer could ever produce. Just life in Israel. No imagination can outdo the living in this Land. Living a life connected to the Torah, connected to HaShem in the Land of Israel is by far the most dramatic, epic, emotional experience you can have on this planet. And you can practice Judaism outside of Israel, you can practice Torah outside of Israel, you can live it in Israel.

And so, I just want to share one Torah with you. And of course, it’s the Torah that’s speaking to us right now, it’s guiding us, it’s a living Word. And we just finished the Torah portion of Bereshit. We’re headed into the Torah portion of Noach and I just want to point out this pattern that teaches the essence of creation, the essence of life.

Creation starts with the creation of light and darkness. And I think it's worthwhile to pause and just explore that first pair. The closest creation to the source, itself, to God, Himself, is light. It's like from HaShem's essence, that was the first thing that was created. God is beyond this world, He's beyond time, He's beyond space, He created time and space, beyond our understanding and our grasp. You want to get as close to God as possible and attach yourself to something you can really wrap your mind around? Meditate on light and darkness. It's only one step removed. And it's in this world, and we can really grasp it.

And so, I'll tell you, Tehila hosted an interview for the Women of Valor, just a few weeks ago. And the woman's name was Nessia. And she was living a life in Mexico as a heavy metal rock star. And she had just signed a big record deal with Universal Studios, I believe. And when you see her heavy metal music video, there's no other way to describe it other than dark. It is just dark music, dark energy, dark clothing. And now, she's living by the Torah in Judea after an incredible journey. And she is just a being of light now. And that interview has stayed with me ever since. And by the way, Tehila tonight, 7:45, is hosting another one. And all of the women of the Fellowship are invited.

But light and dark, it's not something that can be debated, you can just see it. And it's a clear difference. You can see someone that is disconnected from HaShem and the Torah, and you can see someone living by the Torah. And all of a sudden, the same person exudes light. You can see the more people that attach themselves to the God of Israel, the more light they emanate in their life. The more distant you become, the darker. You can worship the other side, you can worship death, it's dark, it's evil.

And that's what this war was really all about from the very beginning. It was bringing all of us back to the basics. So many people were able to see the truth of this world. The truth was so glaring inside Israel after October 7th, after encountering the Chamas, it sparked the revival that we're living through right now. But there were so many people far away from Israel. They decided to keep the blinders on. If you just compare the hostages that were released with the terrorists that were exchanged to release those hostages, you see the innocent light of the Israeli hostages and the darkness of the evil of the murderer terrorists. You can't get more distinct than that. The hostages are so clearly innocent and good, and the terrorist murderers so clearly bad.

That's why King Solomon says the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. If you don't have God in your life, you can't even have the beginning of wisdom. If you can't tell the difference between light and dark, between good and evil, you won't be able to tell the difference between boys and girls and we see that quite literally right now with our own eyes. You won't

have even the beginning of wisdom. And so, first there was light and there was darkness. And you want to get really close to God in this world? Just meditate on that. Because there is a God in the world and He created good and evil, light and dark, and Israel as a light unto the nations, we can either share the light and bring the Torah from Zion, or just our very being attracts the darkness, and we expose the darkness for what it is. Whether it be the Nazis in Germany, or whether it be the Chamas and October 7th. And it's up to everyone to actually really meditate on what that means, light and darkness. And that is the light that's meant to emanate from Zion, and that's why it was the first of all creation.

And so, I want to share just one more video and talk about light. It was a light like I've never seen before. It was the video of Omri Meron who spent 738 days in Chamas captivity. His wife Lishay documented her babies, their children, so he would have an ability to catch up with them. He was there for two years. He had a newborn and a two-year-old. The children didn't really know him and he definitely missed their lives. But watching that video touched for me on the essence of life. And I just want to take one minute out of the video because it's a longer video, but I just want you to see his face, the father, and her face, the mother and wife. And just watching the pictures and the videos of his babies growing up, it's too much not to share with you. Because you can see with your own eyes the light and the love.



So you can see why Israel was obsessed with getting these hostages home, everyone of them is a diamond. So precious. Watching that video and thinking about the 738 days locked away from your wife and children, being told that they were killed, living with that unknown, and then coming home. And imagine Lishay, the mother for two years, hosting birthday parties for her children, trying to keep her devastation away from them, sheltering them, not letting her sadness just crush their little lives. They were such small children and she was so heroic.

And life in Israel, those who follow life in Israel and attach themselves to the heart of Israel, it forces us to be in touch with the essence of life, what really matters. It connects us to the essence of light and darkness, what really brings joy to life, what love is. The world is so lost. And in Israel, in so many ways, it's the compass of the world, showing everyone the north. And you see the Torah points us exactly to that direction. Adam and Eve, they culminate, the first thing they create is their own little family. Noah's commanded to save all of humanity by saving his wife, his children and their families. Ultimately God chooses one family to be sent to the

nations of the world and save humanity from itself. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekkah, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, and all of the children of Israel.

And so the first attempt of humanity coming together without family, under some political leadership of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel totally collapses and fails. In California, there are laws that give priority to the state, they'll literally will take your children away from you if you don't comply with their WOKE agenda. When you take family away, you destroy civilization. All of the Bible is pointing us to build families. Adam and Eve, they didn't plant a tree, they didn't build a building. The first thing they did, was they built live together. And we've said this so many times, but I hope, with the perspective of this war, we really understand this idea now. The nation of Israel is ultimately a family. This Fellowship, that's why we call it an extended global family. It's a movement.

And what does that say to us? All of us want to be a part and join biblical destiny. We all want to fix the world by building the Kingdom of God. What do we do? Our energy and our life force has to be prioritized and directed to the essence, to the light. And the lion's share of our life force should be directed at our homes, at our wives and our husbands and our children and our grandchildren. That is the message encoded in the pattern of the Torah. You see it over and over again. Salvation will come from our families – from Adam and Eve to Noah to Abraham. How God is going to save the world is one family at a time.

And that's something that we can really achieve together. Every person to take responsibility for their own home. And that's why watching these hostage videos is so moving because it's touching the heart. It's moving in the deepest way. It touches the bottom of our hearts. When we see a husband and wife reunited. We see fathers and mothers reunite with their children. As the modern world is obsessed with destroying family, with transgender WOKE ideology, Israel, in our darkest times is serving as a light unto the nations, showing them what really makes life, life.

And so, with that, my friends, I want to bless you with a light from Zion. And it's awesome to have our hostages home, to start this New Year in this new way together. And I can't wait to see how this year unfolds. So with that, I would love to bless you.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

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

Shalom, my friends. I hope the women join tonight for the Women of Valor. Don't forget. And we will see you again soon. And of course, as always, you can always reach out to me. WhatsApp, emails, that's what I'm here for. I would love to connect and I hope that next Fellowship, we'll also do a Fellowship Connection and really allow time to go back and forth. I would love that a lot. But now, we got to go, so shalom, shavua tov, have a beautiful week. Have a beautiful year. We'll see you again soon.

