

Session 63

Yom Kippur: The Holiday of Your Soul

12 September 2021

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0ePDtVD7Pg>

Jeremy

I am so happy to see everyone. This is the most special time of the year. We started the Shmitta year. Yom Kippur is ahead of us and Godly potential is all around us. So, first, I want to give you an update about our farm and about our vineyard. I know that everyone's heart has been on this. And so, we had a decree from the government to destroy our vineyard. A decree came fast, it was totally unexpected. We had almost no time to respond. And I asked the fellowship to pray for us. And Ari and I were just swamped with prayers from all over the world. I know that, you know, people called people from outside of our fellowship to join us in prayer. And there were different prayer groups. We must have had thousands of people from all over the globe focusing at the edge of the Jewish settlements in the Land of Israel and praying for peace and praying for God's will to be done and for prophecy to be fulfilled and for justice to reign.

And, you know, in my experience, I know what I know and I feel what I feel. I know don't know what else to say. Tehila always laughs at me, but I know what I know what I know and I feel what I feel. And now it seems as though I was sent into this world to serve this fellowship. And so many people need prayers, and so many people love the Bible and love Israel and want to take their journey to the next level. And people need answers to questions. And some people need guidance. Well that's why we have Tehila. She's here for that. She's the best at giving people guidance. And some people need to be hosted when they come to Israel. Ari Abramowitz is the most hospitable person that I know. And some people in the fellowship tell me that they always just dreamed just to know that they have a rabbi, a cohen, a priest, a personal connection in Israel that's unique for them, for their family.

But now, for the first time, instead of seeing how we could serve the fellowship in the best way that we can, we asked our fellowship to pray for us. And it became so clear that this is our farm, all of our farm. And this is our mission, all of our mission. And Ari and I and Tehila, we can't do this alone. And so many people just lifted us up in prayer and miracles happened. Nothing less than that. There's no other way to explain it. When we got the decree, there was no negotiating. If you would have asked me, what were the chances that our vineyard would have survived, I would have said, "one in a million." The order had already gone down to the IDF. The ax was on its way down. And our friends, our fellowship, somehow, shook the heavens and the decree was lifted. And the Land Authorities said that we will resume discussions after the Shmitta year. And friends, just so you understand, it was nothing less than a miracle. So, thank you, thank you, HaShem. How wonderful that we saw with our own eyes, the power of prayer and providence over our farm and over our fellowship. It was a wake-up

call to the power that we've been given together as this fellowship, as a community. And so, let's take this time, as we start the first week of the New Year, the Shmitta year, when the Land returns to God and pray together from this Land, His Land, from around the world. We see what power it has. It literally changes reality as we know it.

So, HaShem, King of the Universe, our Father in Heaven. This Land is Yours, our lives are Yours. We're starting off our first week of the New Year, and we're starting it here, learning together, praying together. Look at every family here. Bless them, light up their lives, guide them and lift them up. Thank you for helping us take the next step on this journey together, bringing us closer to each other and in our prayers for Your Land, closer to You. Help us prepare for Yom Kippur. Help us feel Your light and experience the wonder of Your oneness and Your love in all things. Amen.

Well, friends, you know when hard times come and hard times always come, the Torah teaches us that they're there to make you better, make you stronger, to make you more loving, more connected, more faithful. So after a lot of thinking, we were like attacked at the heart of our Land. Forces of darkness were trying to uproot us from the Land. It's Shmitta, we can't even plant trees and on a time of the year we're not even allowed to even pluck a fruit and work the Land. It's God's Land now. They were going to uproot our vineyard. It was like such an act of absolute evil. Just an absolute decree against the will, against the good of the world. And so, what were we going to do? And so the goal strategically when we moved out to the farm was to settle the Land of Israel. That's the mission of this generation. Every generation has their mission. Some, it was to fight the Nazi's. And then one generation had to have the courage to declare the State of Israel and then to face off with seven Arab armies, much larger than them. And then the last generation had to ingather the exiles from every country around the world. There's never been a country in the world that ingathered so many refugees and immigrants per capita than Israel.

I mean, my grandfather when he came to Israel, there were 60,000 Jews in 1916. By 2016, there were over 6 million. There's never been a country in the world that experienced a population explosion from 60,000 to over 6 million in less than a hundred years? I mean, that just never has happened. And it was by ingathering all of these exiles. That was the mission of that generation to lay that foundation of the first ingathering.

And our generation, we're called now, to settle the Land of Israel and bring the Torah to the world and complete the full cycle, the full vision and build God's Kingdom. And so, this is a satellite picture of our farm. Can we get it up on the screen here?



The red, that little box right there, in the heart of our property, right under our retreat center, that's the vineyard that they wanted to destroy. But our goal is much larger than that one valley. We want to make sure that all of the weak, in smaller Jewish villages that are on the edge of Judea, remain united, remain continuous.

There's only one way to do that. And we realize that now. And that's a flock of sheep. And I'm looking at the Duprey's. And I'm looking at Ranae, who was one of the first people, when we first got sheep. She came out to the farm and was tending to our sheep and was kind of teaching us the ropes. Because listen, I'm a city boy. What do I know about sheep? And over the last three years of living here, slowly but surely, I'm learning. And then eventually, we kind of reached a place where like, "Ok, we've past that stage now. We don't need sheep necessarily parading around the perimeter. I'm going to take the sheep that we have and we'll move them over to the new outpost and we'll start settling more of the Land."

And, you know, a few years ago, dear friends of ours, Lisa and Dan, purchased five of our first sheep for our farm. And now they're doing the new work at the outpost. And now, for the first time, we realized that we needed to bring them back. And I thought that we were past that stage in this journey at the Arugot Farm, but I see now that a flock of sheep is fundamental. Maybe it's more spiritual than I realized. Maybe it's more physical than I realized. But now, I want to share this update because this was the practical response to that attack on our farm. It actually now has made our farm bigger, stronger, more beautiful, more diverse. And so, this is an update from early Friday morning, from the mountains of Judea. I don't know how else to bring you into our farm, other than these little videos that I make for you from the Land, but I hope you enjoy it.

Video



Hey fellowship, boker tov, it's pretty early here in the morning. I've been out here for awhile now. I've just been, you know, studying the Torah, preparing for this upcoming fellowship. And as you can see behind me now, that's really what I wanted to tell you. The sun hasn't yet come up over the mountains here on the Dead Sea, but it's just about to in a little bit. And, you know, with this whole fiasco with our vineyards, what all of us realized we needed was a herd of sheep. A

herd of sheep can't be uprooted and a herd of sheep can't be destroyed and a herd of sheep is able to go out and graze all around the periphery of our farm and beyond, ensuring that, you know, sometimes these elements are coordinated. That we'll be intimidated in one area and then there'll try to be an encroachment on another area. And so, this is now securing our borders and securing the borders of the two villages that are next to our farm.

And so we now take the sheep up and go all around, I mean, kilometers of area now to ensure that these lands remain in the hands of the people that developed them. That they remain the Jewish continuous block that it was supposed to be, that this place can prosper, that this place can flourish. And it's just amazing because when we realized that strategically, that's what we needed, we needed a small herd of sheep. Almost immediately members of our fellowship, particularly ones in Israel, said, "no problem." And we were gifted these sheep, enough for the time being. And it's been a blessing, just being out here in the mountains in the morning, learning Torah with sheep kind of munching. There's something very soothing and calming about that, much slower than all the WhatsApp notifications and the emails that our brains are so used to now. Much more soft and calm.

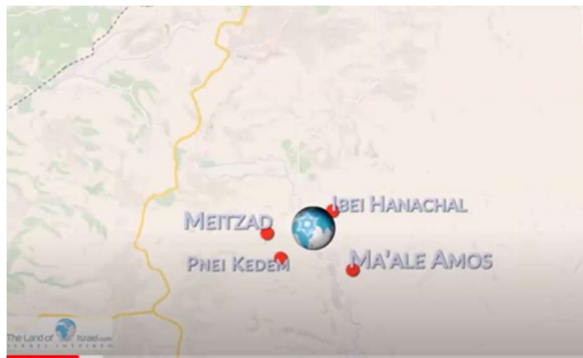
And I think that, you know, the prophets of Israel, the leaders of Israel, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, they all spent time in the mountains with sheep. And there's something about that that's like a calm courage, because you never know what's lying over the mountain over there. Is it a terrorist? Is it a lion, a bear? But at the same time, it's very peaceful and quiet.

And in this week's Torah portion, it says over and over again, to Moses, to the nation, "be strong and courageous." And I think that is the calling for this coming year – strength and courage. All of us need that, whether it's dealing with this global pandemic, or financial problems, family problems, or vineyards that might be destroyed by your own government. Like an auto-immune disease attacking itself. That's what Corona is in some ways, it sparks your immune system and your system destroys its own body. And it's as if Israel right now is having an auto-immune disease, that Israel itself would want to destroy itself. It's so unbelievable. But in the meantime, we have a little flock here, of just a little bit more than 30 sheep that are now grazing these mountains once again.

And so, I just wanted to wish you all a shabbat shalom, as the sun is coming up here over the mountains and introduce you to our new flock of sheep. So, hopefully, I'll have more to say on Sunday after I finish the Torah portion here. (end of video)

Alright, so that was me before sunrise on Friday and you know, I wake up early anyway now. And usually my early mornings, I take time to do deep work. And either it's deep writing or deep reading or I just have quiet where I can really delve into something for at least two hours. And I've found, what's the difference if I'm out with the sheep in the mountains or if I'm in my office downstairs? Like, it's the same thing, but there's something about being in those

mountains with those sheep that blends so perfectly into the mountains. The colors, it's like these are eretz Israel's sheep that have grown there, they're meant to be there and anyway, you have to understand strategically now, with this flock, we can cover an area a hundred times bigger than our vineyard. And make sure it doesn't fall into the wrong hands. Do we have that picture of the map of the four communities?



So you see, where that blue globe is, that's the Arugot Farm, and the two communities, Ibei HaNachal and Ma'ale Amos, our sheep now graze all around through those two communities. Now the other two communities on the left side of that map is Meitzad and P'nei Kedem, at the edge of P'nei Kedem, that's our newest outpost. But there's a huge valley between us. So they're not really connected. You could really take a

horse there or a ranger there or go all the way around, but our flock of sheep are now patrolling those two communities and our small outpost where the other sheep are, are on the other two communities. And now we realize that the Land is still...on the chopping block, and so we're doing what we need to do.

And so, who could have imagined, who could have imagined? I was not about to start working as a shepherd! I went to law school. I didn't know that I was going to be shepherding sheep! But now, most mornings I wake up and my deep work, reading and writing, I'm doing it outside in the mountains. And you know, this vineyard fiasco has thrust me into walking the Land with sheep in the same mountains King David walked with his. Something special is happening here. I don't know what it is yet, but our fellowship is on to something absolutely beautiful. And so, with that practical introduction and the absolute salvation we had for our vineyard and how that real, stressful time has catapulted us into a totally new thing, a beautiful thing, I want to introduce Ari Abramowitz, who's going to take us on our first steps toward Yom Kippur, and help us maximize the potential of this time of the year. And so, Ari, are you with us?

Ari

Shalom, Jeremy, I am. Can you hear me? Fantastic. Ok, so those sheep definitely looked cuter in your video Jeremy, then when you woke me up on Rosh Hashana at 4:15 in the morning by knocking on my bedroom window and we went out to herd the sheep together. That was very kind and gracious of you. I was falling asleep throughout prayers on Rosh Hashana, but you know, I love what you said so much because it's not just the practical reasons that HaShem sort of brings things into our lives for strategic reasons, for practical reasons, for necessities. But then, we start understanding that the deeper reason is the thing itself. Is the sheep itself. Is the indigenous, Judean, natural connection in the soul of a Jew taking out sheep in the morning. There's something healthy and beautiful about it.

But anyways, Jeremy, are you with me? Raise your hand if you can hear me. Just want to make sure. Ok. These weeks, my friends, are so packed between the Torah portion and the High Holidays, it feels like every moment counts. Every moment is filled with so much potential, which is very exciting, but for me personally, it can also feel somewhat painful. When I feel like I'm not using every moment to the fullest. As I've shared with you before, part of my internal work has been to try and let those feelings go. Which hasn't been easy because I've come to realize that somehow over the years, I've attached some feeling of holiness to feeling guilty. Guilty that I'm wasting my time or guilty that I'm falling short or guilty for one reason or another. And surprise, surprise! A Jew feeling guilty. You know the joke, right? How does a Jewish grandmother change a light bulb? She sighs and says, "that's alright, I'll just sit in the dark." That's the way it works. We're known for our guilt.

But I realized that those feelings just weren't serving me well. So, I've really tried to let them go and start now. Now, being whatever moment I find myself in when I have the thought. And it hasn't been easy because you know the older we get, the more rigid is the neural wiring in our brains. And we'll get into that a little bit later. But it's always possible, no matter how rigid these neural wirings are, it's always possible to change. And I've realized that this specific work has really been serving me this time around because I've found that I'm more open to opportunities all around me that I may not have seen otherwise because I would have been too busy feeling guilty or thinking about how I'm not using my time well or that the opportunities would just pass me by. And by the way, you can see how the evil inclination would thrive on those feelings. And encourage me to feel holy thinking about how I'm falling short and how my guilt is somehow a virtue.

Anyways, one of the opportunities that presented itself to me was to ascend to Har Habayit. To the Temple Mount, which I have not done in a very long time, and right before Rosh Hashana. I went up to the Temple Mount with none other than one of my greatest rabbis and inspirations – Rav Simcha Hochbaum. I spoke about him last week. I just learn so much from him. Not just what he teaches me, but just who he is. But I'll get into that a little bit later. So, I immersed myself in the mikveh, in the purifying ritual bath which one does before ascending to the Holy of Holies. And we went to the Old City and we were among the very last group to ascend to the Temple Mount for the year 5781, which was a great honor.



This is a picture of me and Rav Simcha when we were up on the Temple Mount. Anyways, it was very special, it was very powerful. I feel like just going up there, you can start to feel the time and space continuum bending. Even just a little bit. There's definitely a power and a Presence up there. And when we were up there, I just poured out my heart for myself, for Shaena, for Dvash, for my family, for Jeremy's family, for the nation of Israel, for the whole world and in particular, for all of you. Really, I mean, in particular. I want you to know that I carry you with me. As does Jeremy, I'm sure. And our families. It was a special prayer up there because with all the craziness that's happening in the world and in Israel, all over the place, when we arrived at the eastern side of the Temple Mount with our backs facing Har Zaytim, the Mount of Olives, and our fronts facing where the altar was and will be, we davened Mincha, the afternoon prayer service. An organized prayer service on the Temple Mount, in an organized minyan. It was huge! Jeremy, could you imagine such a thing? When we were detained and arrested before. Just a few years ago, right? We were carted off in handcuffs for just saying kadish, for just praying to God. And now, there's a prayer service.

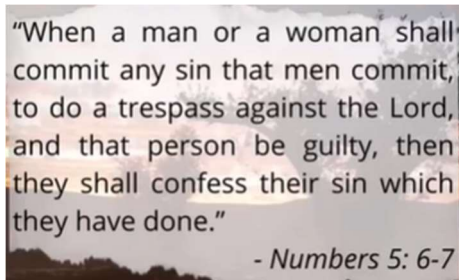
And it was so encouraging and uplifting. And although we needed to whisper the prayers in a hush, we were praying together. To me, it was just another sign that slowly but surely, the light of redemption is already beginning to shine and with all the crazy distractions, it's sometimes hard to experience it, but it's definitely there, beginning to illuminate the entire world.

Anyways, so I prayed for all of you there on the Temple Mount. And then during services on Rosh Hashana, in Ibei HaNachal, I prayed for you then as well. And then, even last night when Shaena and I took our date night to the Western Wall to pray together ahead of Yom Kippur, I prayed for you then, also. And among other things, I prayed that HaShem should bless all of you in these same ways that you've blessed us. That He should strengthen you and encourage you and fill your hearts with inspiration and motivation to return to Him with a full heart and with complete repentance, with tshuva gamurah. That we should all be able to repent in a healthy way and in a purifying way.

And that my friends, is not a small ask. Because when it comes to repentance, the stakes are high. The spiritual power of tshuva has overwhelming and transformative powers. There are countless books and volumes and laws and teachings on the subject of how to repent correctly. Because think about it. Just on the most basic level, we're revisiting or even reliving some of our lowest points of the year. And if not done correctly, it can get us down, rather than lifting us up. It can make us feel dirty, rather than cleansing us. We really need to go into it with proper intentions and faith that this reflection and this confession, that the whole process is

one of the greatest Divine gifts imaginable. That we're not incriminating ourselves, but we're cleansing ourselves in the deepest way possible.

Anyways, here's what the Rambam Maimonides says about how to go about tshuva. He says that with regard to all the precepts of the Torah, positives and negatives, if a person transgresses any of them, either willfully or in error and repents and turns away from his sin, he's under a duty to confess before God. Before HaShem, as it is said in Numbers, chapter 5:6-7:



"When a man or a woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty, then they shall confess their sin which they have done."
- Numbers 5: 6-7

This means, to confess in words, Maimonides explains. And this confession is a positive command. And how does one confess? The penitent says, "I beseech You, O Lord, I have sinned, I have acted perversely, I have transgressed before You and I have done such and such. You say it right then, what it is. And I repent and I'm ashamed of my deeds and I'll never do this again. The Rambam says that

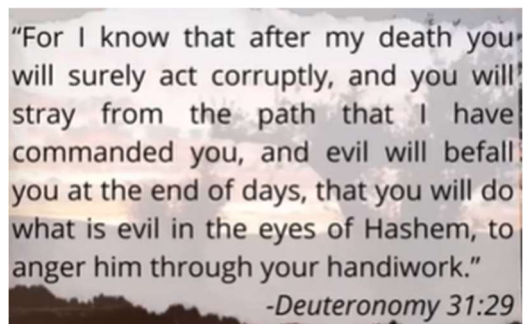
this constitutes the essence of confession. And the further one goes into the details and the further the detail of that confession is, the more praiseworthy he is. So it's really that simple. If you need to apologize to another person, of course you do it in very much the same way, but to them first. And then ultimately, we turn to HaShem and lay it all out before Him.

And Rabbi Fohrman pointed out actually that the very act of repentance transcends time in the deepest way. We start by looking at the past and enumerating our sins. And then we arrive at the present and allow ourselves to feel sincere regret and shame in our hearts for having let ourselves veer so far from HaShem. And then, we look towards the future. And we commit to not continuing on this path, to not committing the sin again. And for that moment, for that moment of sincere tshuva, we are becoming a different person in all the dimensions – in the past, in the present and in the future. I remember realizing this truth when it came to working on the attribute of anger. As bad tempers are a feature of my family intergenerationally. My father, and his father, I know for sure and his father and beyond that, all the way back to who knows who the most angry person in Biblical times was. But I probably was descended from him.

And I remember learning this cutting-edge discovery of neural physiology and how our thinking and behavior can actually change who we are physically. I'm telling you, it was such a breakthrough for me. So the study that opened my eyes, explained that our brains are neurologically wired in a certain way based on our thinking and behavior. And the more we act in any given way, the stronger that neuro connection becomes and the more powerfully the behavior is reinforced. But, if through the sheer force of our desire and our will we act in a different way, we react to the same stimulus, but through the power and commitment and faith in HaShem, we react differently. Well then, new neuro pathways are forged. And the

more we travel those new pathways, the stronger they become and they become more and more who we are. Meaning that through working on ourselves, and refining our attributes, we're becoming new people. Not only spiritually, but physiology. That's when I realized that it wouldn't even be fair to be judged as the person who sinned and erred in those ways because we're a new person, not only spiritually but physically as well.

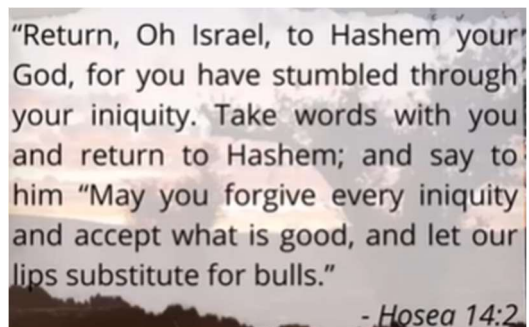
And this was important for me to keep in mind as I was reading through this past Torah portion. Because the thematic connection is so strong to repentance, to return. Because when I originally, initially read one of the last verses of the Torah portion, it's actually the shortest Torah portion of the year. It got me down. And, here in this verse, Moshe proclaims as his death is drawing close, he calls out to the elders of the tribes and the officers to gather to him and here's what he says, Deuteronomy chapter 31, verse 29:



"For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly, and you will stray from the path that I have commanded you, and evil will befall you at the end of days, that you will do what is evil in the eyes of Hashem, to anger him through your handiwork."
-Deuteronomy 31:29

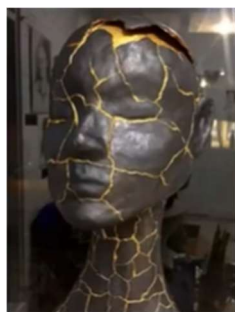
So the reason this made me sad was because it wasn't the often repeated warning of "if" you do bad and commit evil and stray from HaShem's ways, "then" bad things will happen. It wasn't "if/then." This was saying, "You are going to sin and bad things will happen." But upon the very first verses of the Haftorah, the portion of the prophets, I was immediately comforted. You go from the Torah

portion to the Haftorah, and what does the prophet Hosea say in chapter 14, verse 2:



"Return, Oh Israel, to Hashem your God, for you have stumbled through your iniquity. Take words with you and return to Hashem; and say to him "May you forgive every iniquity and accept what is good, and let our lips substitute for bulls."
- Hosea 14:2

I'm still working out 100 percent why this comforted me so deeply, but I think it has something to do with the realization that we were made to fall. That it was built into the story of mankind. That we were destined to fall and that something more beautiful results from falling and getting back up than if we were never to have fallen at all. And I believe this is a universal truth.



I remember seeing a type of sculpture, I think it was Japanese, in which the sculpture was made and then it was intentionally broken, just to be put back together with gold to become more beautiful after the shattering than it was before.

So if everybody falls, what differentiates a true servant of HaShem from everyone else? And I think the answer is that a true servant of HaShem never stops getting up again. We never stop rising from the dust and seeking to return with more zeal and more determination and that we seek to use our fall to come even closer than we were before. We don't need to continue persecuting ourselves for every mistake and every sin, for Hosea tells us in the name of HaShem exactly what we need to do. We don't need to wait for the Temple. We don't need to wait for anything. We can do it right now! We take our words, we pull them from the depths of our hearts, that's the most important part and we pour them out before our Father in Heaven that's waiting for us. Eagerly, longingly, with His arms wide open, with His heart wide open.

Alright friends, I think I've gone overtime, but may we all have an uplifting and meaningful Yom Kippur in which our sincere repentance is accepted and we're born again. We're born again before HaShem with a new clean slate that we can fill with light and love and holiness and redemption and salvation. May we all be sealed in the book of life, true life. Shalom, shalom, my friends, love you all so much.

Jeremy

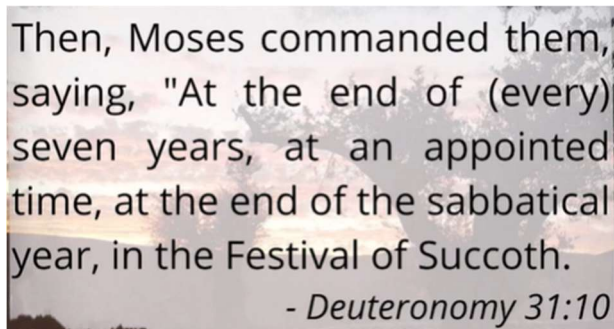
Thank you, Ari, just beautiful. And it's in perfect line with what I want to talk about. It's like, that is the Torah portion that we read before Yom Kippur every year. And in that Torah portion, it tells us, we're going to fall. We're going to sin, that is prophecy, that is God's will, that's what's going to happen, there's no way out of it and in some way, that is the depth of Yom Kippur. And I'm going to go deeper into that soon.

But before we go deep, deep, into Yom Kippur, because it really is a mind-blowing Jewish way of seeing the world. And it's Jewish because the catholic church has really ...the Western world doesn't really understand Yom Kippur. And I feel like, because of that, so much of the Jewish world was brought up in the Western world. So we don't even know what Yom Kippur is. So, before we go deeper into that, what I want to do is to invite Tehila here to give us a bird's eye view of this time and of Yom Kippur.

I mean there's a famous question that everyone at some point who's ever learned the Bible asks. It's like, why on earth do we call this time of year the New Year, when the Bible famously says in the book of Exodus, that Nissan is the first of the month? And the Torah itself calls this month the 7th month? How could this be the new year? I mean, spring-time is meant to be the New Year. And so, the answer is so beautiful. And it's also written all over the Bible. But now, we have a resident scholar, Tehila Gimpel, to bring all the pieces together for us and really light up this time of year. And when she taught me this earlier, I was absolutely inspired and thrilled that Tehila isn't afraid of doing the nitty-gritty details and the deep research that's involved in putting all the pieces together. And so, I knew she has an absolutely amazing teaching for us. I haven't heard this version yet, but I know that it's going to be beautiful. So, here is Tehila for you.

Tehila

Hey guys, I hope you're all doing well and had a good Rosh Hashana and Shabbat. You guys know me pretty well by now. So you probably already know when the Torah portion and the time of the year that we're in come together. And I always think it's so cool to feel how the Torah portion is directly speaking to something that's happening to us in our specific time. So, I want to ask a question that comes up for me in this week's Torah portion. And the question is, "when is the New Year according to the Torah?" Now you guys might be looking at me a little funny because we've studying together for Rosh Hashana, which is the New Year and that's kind of duh, right? Rosh Hashana is the New Year, that's so obvious. And that is the intuitive answer. But, this week's portion makes us question that a little. In this week's portion, it talks about the mitzvah of reading the Torah at the end of, for all the people, at the end of the seventh year. In chapter 31, verse 10, it says,



Then, Moses commanded them, saying, "At the end of (every) seven years, at an appointed time, at the end of the sabbatical year, in the Festival of Succoth."
- Deuteronomy 31:10

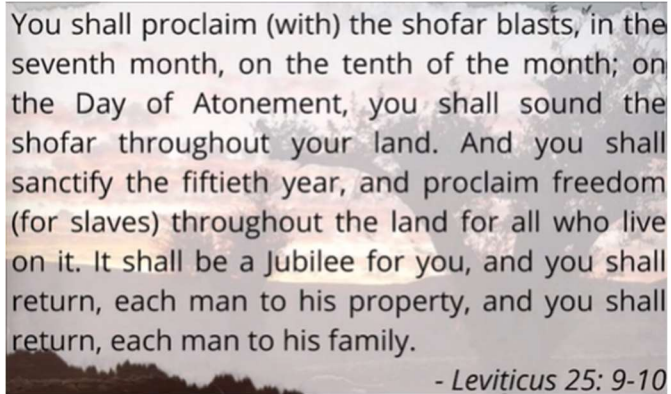
Now there's so many things that are confusing about the timing in this verse, that I have to read it again.

That's a head-scratcher, right? Because if it's the end of seven years, how is that even the Sabbatical Year? We know the 7th year is the Sabbatical Year, just like we've just started right now. This year is the Sabbatical Year, it started on Rosh Hashana, it's going to finish at the end of the year. So, if Rosh Hashana comes after the 7th year, by Sukkot, it's already not defined as the Sabbatical Year, right?

Here's something even more weird, how can Sukkot be considered the end of the Sabbatical Year, or any year for that matter? Right? It says at the end of seven years during Sukkot, but Sukkot always comes after Rosh Hashana. So if Rosh Hashana is the first day of the New Year, definitionally, Sukkot that comes after Rosh Hashana has to be in the beginning of the year, can't be in the end of the year. How could it be defined as marking the end of the Sabbatical year in the verse in this week's portion?

So to understand this, I want share something I learned many, many years ago from Rabbi Yoel Ben Nun who is considered one of Israel's leading Biblical scholars. And I had the privilege and pleasure of getting to study in his weekly Torah classes many years ago, before I even got married. So Rav Yoel points out that this isn't the only verse in the Torah that kind of shakes our certainty about Rosh Hashana being the New Year. He says that there are tons of other

verses that put this whole thing into confusion. Here's just a few examples. How about Leviticus 25:9:



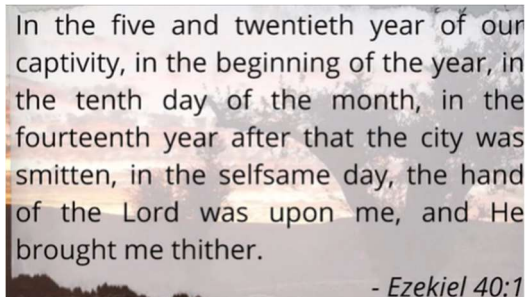
You shall proclaim (with) the shofar blasts, in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month; on the Day of Atonement, you shall sound the shofar throughout your land. And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year, and proclaim freedom (for slaves) throughout the land for all who live on it. It shall be a Jubilee for you, and you shall return, each man to his property, and you shall return, each man to his family.

- Leviticus 25: 9-10

So, according to Leviticus, we know that the 50th year is the Jubilee Year. Everyone goes back to their ancestral land inherited, but it says that it starts on the 10th day of the month. Now things are really confusing. We always think that Rosh Hashana is the beginning of the year, but our portion makes us think that maybe it's in the end of Sukkot, but then in Leviticus, it sounds like the Jubilee starts on Yom

Kippur, so it's not either of the other likely suspects for the beginning of the New Year. This is really weird.

Now, check this out. Ezekiel seems to be part of the confusion, too. In Ezekiel 40, verse 1, he says –



In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day, the hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me thither.

- Ezekiel 40:1

It actually says in Hebrew, Rosh Hashana. Now's it's really confusing. Did he just call Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashana, like Rosh Hashana meaning the head of the year, the New Year?

So maybe we're looking at this totally the wrong way. Maybe we've been colored by western culture that looks at the New Year as this really specific point in time. Like we're all kind of used to this idea that at midnight, make sure to kiss, the ball is going to drop on Time Square, 3...2...1...whoohoo, right? New Years! Maybe that's not the Biblical way of looking at things. Maybe it's not the godly way of looking at things. Let's look at nature, at creation that HaShem made. There's no midnight in creation. That doesn't exist in the natural world. Think about sunset. When you sit and watch the sunset, is it an exact moment? Like imagine you're sitting with your spouse, watching a beautiful sunset and you're like....sunset just happened. Let's get up, it's done. No! It's like, this process. There are the colors and the sun is dipping and we call all of that sunset. And yes, there's the moment when the sun dips below the horizon, but you still see the light over the horizon, and maybe from a different vantage point you would still see the sun. Think about even Shabbat. There's a reason why Shabbat is 25 hours and not 24 hours. It's because it's really hard to pinpoint that exact time that Shabbat should start, the exact time that Shabbat should finish. So, our sages set for us times, but it's always with a sort

of like extra, safety, you know, to make sure that you don't cut into Shabbat. So we start Shabbat a little bit before the sunset and we finish it after the stars come out because we're not exactly sure how to pinpoint and nail down a precise, singular 24 hour day in the natural world. Same as with the seasons. Humans made specific days...well today is the first day of winter, or today is Groundhog Day. In reality the seasons don't change all at once. We know that in our life, right? They change in a process. It could be that you slowly start seeing the temperatures getting a little colder or a little warmer. Change is a process.

So maybe, the Jewish year, doesn't start in a precise moment, but in a period of time, like a season of renewal that has a lot of different aspects. Maybe Rosh Hashana is the beginning of the beginning of the New Year and Sukkot is the end of the New Year. And that space in-between is like the overlap of the past year and the coming year. It's like twilight where it's not daytime and it's not nighttime. It's not fully the old year and it's not fully the New Year, it's kind of this place where they meet. It's a different way of looking at time then what we might be accustomed to in Western culture. We think of it as, "Ok, midnight, it used to be 2021, now it's 2022. Good-bye 2021, see you later!"

In the Torah, we have this period of time that brings together all of the aspects and processes that we need to be going through spiritually in order to end one year and begin another. It's kind of like a chain. Think about a chain. Like one link in the chain closes over the other one and they overlap. We don't say goodbye to the New Year all at once and go into the New Year, saying, well say "goodbye" to the old year and "hello" New Year. And that's it. We go through this reflection that's backwards facing and forward facing. You can see it in the names of Rosh Hashana. In the Bible, it's called, Yom Teruah, a day of sounding the shofar. When do you sound a horn blast? When like a king is coming. Right? It's considered a day of setting HaShem as King in our lives for the coming year. Like...hooooo...welcome the King!

But in the writings of the sages and in all the prayer books, Rosh Hashana is called Yom HaZikaron, a day of remembering. And it's HaShem remembering our past year and us remembering our past year, reflecting on our year. It's so different than what we expect because we're used to people saying, "Hey, what's your new year's resolution?" Only forward facing. Our New Year is, you can even see it in the names, it's this combination of the old year and deciding what we're going to do in the New Year. It's reflection and forward facing.

Then we have ten days of repentance and Yom Kippur. These are the big days of forgiveness and tshuva. Isn't it interesting, like let me ask you a question. Like if you were Hashem, how would you have set up the calendar? Wouldn't you have put...now think about this for a second. Wouldn't you have put the day of memory and the day of repentance in the month of Elul, right? In last month? The last month of the past year. Wouldn't you just want to start the New Year all clean and fresh and forgiven. Like if it was me, I would do Remembrance Day, let's say like Rosh Hashana, Remembrance Day, the day of thinking back on the last year, on the 20th

of Elul. Then 10 days of repentance to finish off the year, saying sorry for all the things I've done in the past year, the last day of the year, Yom Kippur. And then start the New Year with Sukkot, celebrate the agriculture season, celebrating the rain that's about to begin. Happy dancing, Simchat Torah, starting all the Torah portions all over again. Like, I don't want to tell HaShem how to do His business, but that kind of seems like a way smarter way to do things. You remember everything in the past, you finish it, and then start the year happy. But that's precisely the secret. There is no beginning in the Biblical way of looking at things without including in it the reflection in the past and you can't reflect on the past without also contemplating the future. There's no value to just looking at your past if it's not tied together with how you're planning your future.

So HaShem gave us this time that's not just one point in time, but it's overlapping time, not here or there. It's the end and the beginning at the same time. Now it's also important in this context to remember that the Biblical way of counting time is so unique. If we look at the Western, Christian way of counting time, we have the Gregorian calendar which is entirely solar. It's giving no attention to the moon, no attention to the cycle of the lunar month, it's just 365 days, the time it takes to rotate around the sun and finish the cycle of the four seasons. And that's it. When you look at the Muslim calendar, it's the opposite. Entirely lunar, ignores the season, their holidays come out at different times of year. Like Ramadan can sometimes be in winter and sometimes be in summer cause the solar year and the lunar year are different lengths and they don't match up.

Only the Torah combines both calendars. The Torah teaches us that Nissan, the month of Passover is always set to be in the spring. That's why we have leap years, in order to make sure that the lunar and solar years always match up. The Torah weaves together all the elements of nature into one unified vision of time. So in our version of the New Year, we have Rosh Hashana, which is the first lunar day of the year and Sukkot, which is the beginning of the solar, seasonal, time of the seasons changing from the dry season to the rainy season and all the fruitfulness that comes with the rain. We tie them together to recognize that HaShem rules all the aspects of nature. That all the elements of our world and our existence are integrated and tied together.

So, instead of thinking about this New Year as one day that happens, why don't we think about looking at this entire time that we're in, between Rosh Hashana and the end of Sukkot, Simchat Torah, as a special season. As a gift that Hashem gave us for this whole time, this long time, that we can renew ourselves in every aspect. On Rosh Hashana, we remember and we choose to make HaShem our King in the coming year. On Yom Kippur we focus on repentance so we can begin the year spiritually with a clean slate. On Sukkot, because it's an agriculture new year, it's really symbolic of our sustenance, how we make our physical existence, how we set up our physical work and income and our jobs. Like, it's a good time to thank HaShem then for the abundance in our lives, for the physical abundance, for the blessings that we have. How do we

want to carry ourselves? It's time to think, how do we want to carry ourselves in our work? We want to be honest, charitable, fair, faithful, right? Then we have Simchat Torah, the last day where we start the Torah portions again. We go back to Genesis and we commit ourselves to think and contemplate about how we want to plan and be diligent in our Torah study for the coming year.

It would be impossible to have all those different levels of reflection packed into one day. So HaShem gives us this long, full, rich, meaningful season of contemplation. And I find this personally comforting. Maybe you guys will identify with this a little. Sometimes when there is like this one moment. Jeremy kind of laughs at me about this. I don't know if you guys also have this. But I have this a lot, where I am like waiting for this one climactic, important moment. I wait for it, I wait for it, I'm so exciting, and then it comes and I'm like, "oh shoot, I missed it! Oh, I wasn't ready. Oh, I wish I could do that again, I need a do-over."

I have to tell you guys a really funny story. Our family loves passion fruit. Ok, this is going to sound like a strange story, but stick with me for a second. We love passion fruit. And I'm like, ok, we love passion fruit. Jeremy, let's go to town. Let's go wild. We're going to buy three passion fruits. You guys know Jeremy by now. He's not a "do things half way" kind of guy. He's an "all in" kind of guy. So, Jeremy, he's like, "um-hum," and then comes home with like 20 passion fruit plants and our entire garden is plastered with passion fruit plants. But we have some sort of like I guess, I don't know, climate issue. Our fruits, at least it feels like they never get ripe. And we're waiting, and waiting, and waiting for them to get ripe. They never get ripe. And then, it's like they're teasing us. And then we see on one of our trees, three ripe passion fruits. And we're looking at these passion fruits and fantasizing about them and like, we're going to save them for this perfect moment. There are three ripe ones. Maybe we'll save them for Shabbat, we'll save them for Sukkot, ok...we'll cut them open, we'll give a little bit to each kid because there's not enough for all of our kids and we're planning this moment.

And then the other day, our friend and partner and neighbor at the farm, Roni, he came over and talked to Jeremy and he always has like a kid on his back and a kid on his front and he came with his three little guys. And he so nonchalantly walked by our passion tree and he goes...pluck, pluck, pluck. Tosses one to one kid, one to the other kid, one to the other kid. They poked a hole in it and went whoosh, slurped the fruit out, and tossed it on the ground. Me and Jeremy are like, "what just happened? For me it was like, the classic thing that always happens to me when I'm planning this one, perfect moment, and then I miss it.

So, I find this season, this idea of the Rosh Hashana season to be really comforting in that even if you didn't have the perfect Rosh Hashana that you planned, mine wasn't perfect. I wasn't able to go to synagogue, my kids are all sick with covid and I was busy running around taking care of them. It wasn't exactly the prime of religious moments of my life, let's say. But I

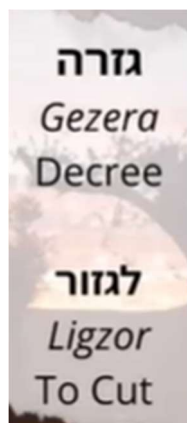
find it comforting to know that it's not like one moment and if you miss it, too bad, wait till next year. Hashem is kind and merciful and He gives us an entire season to begin our New Year.

So, I wish you guys a beautiful New Year season. And I'm so blessed and lucky to be able to go through this season, for us to all be together and go through this rich season of contemplation and renewal together. Bye, guys!

Jeremy

Thank you, Tehila. It's just true. We were all devastated over our three passion fruits. And Ari, you're not allowed to touch our passion fruits. It's Shmitta year, but you're not allowed. Everyone is allowed, not you. Alright, so that was exactly true what Tehila said, and that's important that this whole thing is not just a season of the New Year, but it's a process that we go through. That Judaism isn't, it's not so much about faith. The Bible, there's very little in the Hebrew Bible of the Tanakh, where it's like, you have to believe this, this or that. It's an experience. You're encountering God. You're living in a relationship with God. And then when you go to the Temple and you're living through these times, you're experiencing something. And that experience still exists, even if the Temple doesn't.

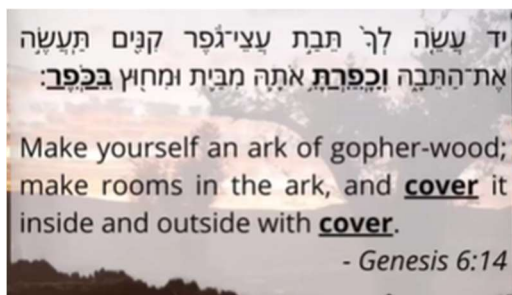
And so, to understand Yom Kippur, like Tehila said, that this is a season. And this new year is a part of this longer process. You can't really understand Yom Kippur as a stand-alone holiday because it doesn't stand-alone. The best way to understand Yom Kippur is to contrast it with Rosh Hashana. So we have Rosh Hashana. And that's the beginning of this process. We crown God as King of Kings, King of the Universe, the King of the World, the King of our lives. And in that stance, we humbly stand before the King and we're very much separated from Him. We're His subjects, we're His children. We stand before the truth of our lives and a decree comes down who we are. And the word "decree" in Hebrew is unbelievable. Because we stand before the King and the truth is revealed. There's no where to move, there's no one to hide, there's no one to trick, there's just you're standing before reality itself. Can you please put the slide up about decree on the screen for just a second?



So the word in Hebrew, decree, comes from the same root as gezer, ligzor means to cut. It's the same root. And what that's teaching us, in that posture, when we're standing before the King and we receive the decree of our past memories, Yom HaZikaron, we're cut off from God. We experience one aspect of being. And that is being independent, free, separate from God. And that's incredibly important to experience. God is the King and we're His subjects. It's so fundamental. It's the first thing that we should experience. But, in that time, it's like we take extreme ownership of our lives. We did good, we did bad, we are responsible for our lives, we are loyal to the King, we stand before the truth and crown God as King. But that's not all of life. That's one aspect of life.

That's one experience of living in a relationship with HaShem. On Rosh Hashana, we experience that "decree" and we're removed, cut-off from Him.

Yom Kippur, is the exact opposite experience. We are fully immersed, fully connected, fully one with God. We are absolutely covered in His embrace. And experience existence as a part of His wholeness. There's no separation. There's total atonement. But, atonement as at-one-ment. That's really what atonement is, if you're going to translate that word as atonement. Look at the word, Yom Kippur. What does it mean in Hebrew, kippur? What is that word? So the first time that word appears in the Torah is with Noah's ark. And here's what it says:



And cover it – v'kafarta otah. With a cover. What does the word kofer mean? What does kippur mean? The first time it's written in the Bible, what is the root? It literally means, to be totally covered with God. On Rosh Hashana, we're like separate. He is in the palace, we're down below. On Yom Kippur, we're absolutely in His total embrace.

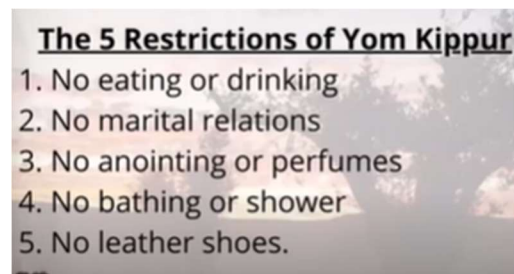
Now you might think "covered" like a stain. Like there's a stain on this, so let's cover it with a patch. That's not the heart of Yom Kippur though. It's not about painting over a stain with a stronger color. It is to be fully covered in God's Presence. Yom Kippur is the day that the cloud of glory returned to the camp after the sin of the calf. The cloud that fully covered all of Israel in total immersion, total connectedness. The best way to think about it, is the practice that every Jew does before Yom Kippur. Before Yom Kippur, everyone goes to the mikveh. To the ritual bath. Everyone experiences being fully covered by purifying waters. We dramatize it, we embody it, we feel it, we experience it. Fully. Entering into the mikveh, it's like you enact, and actively immerse yourself back into God's all-encompassing oneness. It's like simulating the experience of existing within Him.

It's the opposite spiritual posture than Rosh Hashana. When we're separate from the King on High. This day completes the full picture of what it is to be a human, living in relationship with God. In reality, we are fully immersed in His existence. Nothing exists outside of Him. Everything is within His will and we are all a part of His oneness. That's why the Torah says, "yes, you're going to sin. That's also a part of My oneness. That's also a part of My will." In that moment, we just accept it as it is.

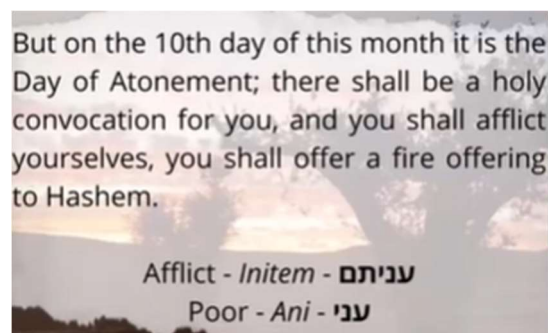
What does it look like? It's like, for one day, we leave our body behind. The body is the one thing that gives us this illusion that we're separate from God. And in some ways, we are, but in the deepest sense of reality, we're totally connected to God, our soul is literally His light. On the deepest level, our soul, God dwells within us. Like a father has physical DNA encoded into

his baby. Spiritually, like a ray from the sun that is shining from the source, it's totally connected. A part of, an expression of the sun. We're aspects and rays of His light in the world.

So on Yom Kippur, we leave the body behind and exist as a soul, like an angel for one day. So that's what the laws of Yom Kippur are here to express. There are five restrictions that we keep on Yom Kippur. Can we get those up on the screen?



Just like, everything that we would do for our body, it's just ignored. We're just not a part of that. Our leather shoes...no leather shoes. That also brings back the skin, the animal side of us. It's like we're leaving all of that behind and we're going to try to for one day to stand before God without our body, just as a soul. And as a soul, we are absolutely one with HaShem. And for one day we stand without separation. Totally covered. Kippur. Totally to be covered. That's the best way to understand the essence of Yom Kippur. It's like a mikveh in time. Yom Kippur is like a mikveh in time. Look at what Scripture says here in Leviticus 23, verse 27:



Now the word "afflict yourself" in Hebrew is v'initem. So they have to translate it as something, so they say, "afflict yourself." And that's not a bad translation. But the word "ani" literally means "poor." It's like take your body and just make it poor. It's not relevant. Weaken it, it's not about that. Like make your body poor, don't feed your body, exercise, no. This is not about our body today.

You make your body poor today.

And also notice that that verse starts with the word, "but." That's very peculiar to start off a sentence with the word, "but." Because the verses right before that are saying, on the first of the month you're going to experience Rosh Hashana and I'm going to be King. BUT, on the 10th of the month, on Yom Kippur, you're going to have a completely different experience. You're going to experience something that is the happiest time of the year for the people of Israel in the Land of Israel. It's recorded as the happiest time. We're totally connected, totally aligned with God. Nothing is better than that. And the verse says, you know, we gotta let go of the body.

On Yom Kippur, we're reminded that this world is His, this soul is Him, everything that happened in this world, we're totally forgiven, because whatever happened, He wanted it to happen. His plan is perfect for my life and everything that has happened in my life is a part of that plan. If something bad happened to me or I did something bad in the past, it was God's will entirely. It was already prophesied from the beginning. We're totally covered. And are we going to be awake to that? Are we going to live by that?

So, Rabbi David Aaron, one of my dearest teachers once said, "Our real choice is whether to become a conscious partner with God in making of history or an unconscious tool in His plan." Full tshuva is to choose to fully align with God's will, to choose to do God's will and to contribute to His plan in an active, conscious way. Realizing our destiny and experiencing the ecstasy of the unchangeable truth that God is one and we are one with Him. His will is going to be done one way or the other. So we can ignore it and we'll just be a tool in His plan. But everything is a part of His plan. The good, the bad, the ugly, the mitzvah, the sin. All of it. Only one day a year. We can't live like that at all times. We even need Rosh Hashana at the beginning to make sure that we remember, God is King and I'm down here.

But the Temple service reveals this truth in the most radical way. It's so radical that the King James translation and every Western translation mistranslate the Yom Kippur sacrifice. Because the sacrifice is a drama. The experience of everything that we're talking about, what Ari mentioned before, about it being prophesied that we're going to sin, prophesied that we're going to fall and prophesied that we're going to rise back up. And if you miss the Temple service, you miss the feast, you miss the heart of the day. Look at what Scripture says in Leviticus chapter 16, verse 7 through 10:

And he shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the door of the Tabernacle of the congregation.
And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the lord and the other lot for Azazel.
And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell and offer him for a sin offering.
But the goat, on which the lot fell to Azazel shall be stood alive before Hashem to provide atonement through it, to send it to Azazel to the Wilderness.
- Leviticus 16:7-10

Azazel, and it's always translated as a scapegoat. It's not a scapegoat. It's a sacrifice for Azazel.

Understand what that's saying. It doesn't say, "who" or "what" that sacrifice is. It's pointed to, to "who," to "where"? Who is this sacrifice to? On Yom Kippur, there are two sacrifices. In a lottery, the lottery represents, this result, it's entirely in the

Hands of God. One sacrifice is to God, and one sacrifice is to Azazel. It's so radical. In modern Hebrew, if you want to tell someone to "go to hell," you say, "lech la'azazel." Azazel is "hell." Azazel is the dark side. It's as if on our holiest day, we are sacrificing to satan, himself. And what?? That's God's command to us to do? Sacrificing to Azazel? It's like the ultimate betrayal. It's idolatry of the highest order. What on earth are the people of Israel experiencing in all of this?

What they're experiencing is maybe one of the most psychologically healing ideas in all of the Torah. All of us over the year have made mistakes. All of us have betrayed ourselves. All of us have betrayed God's will. We serve the lower parts inside of us, the physical and not the spiritual. When we serve our body and let our body rule over our lives, the sensation and perception causes us to feel separation from the source, separated from God. We really feel that on Rosh Hashana.

But on Yom Kippur, we do a full reset. Total renewal. We recognize the truth of existence. God gave us this body. He knows what we're capable of and what we're not. We may think we've served the dark side. We may think we even sacrificed to satan, himself in the dumb things we have done. We may think we have failed, we may think we are traitors, we have betrayed God. We've betrayed who we are. On Yom Kippur, God shows us, you can sacrifice to satan, himself. That's my command. Don't worry. You're totally covered. That is My will. All of your mistakes? Those were My will, too. Everything that has happened in your life, is in My will. You have nothing to fear. There's only love here. You've done nothing wrong at all. The day itself is a mikveh. You're fully immersed in My love. You stand before Me today and all you have is absolute love. Absolute forgiveness. Absolute atonement. Absolute oneness. You can do no wrong in My loving eyes. I'm always going to accept you back. If it's in the past, it was God's will.

And now, move forward with God's blessing behind you. If something bad happened to you, if you did something bad, you cannot act against God. His will will be done. Always. Nothing is outside of His will. If it happened in the past, it was meant to happen. You stood before HaShem on Rosh Hashana and owned up to your responsibility, fully. That's one aspect of being. But that's not the full experience. On Yom Kippur, our Father reveals the ultimate truth. Ain ode milvado. There is nothing other than Him. There is nothing other than love and the life that He gives us. If we return to God in love, all of our past mistakes are catapulted to the future. The sages of Israel based on Ezekiel 18 tell us that all of our sins, they're not only forgiven, but they're transformed into mitzvahs. Like our minus in the bank, it isn't just erased. It's like we had a \$500,000 debt, we were just deposited a million dollars. And in our account now, we have \$500,000 in the green. It's like there's absolute love here. If we are aligned with God, all of the bad is good. If we come with love, we are ready to go into this New Year in a totally new way. It's more than forgiveness. It's ultimate empowerment. It's the total, unconditional love that is beyond our world. It's the truth of life, guided by tshuva. That's what Yom Kippur is all about.

And so, it's to experience this process of standing before the King and then being absolutely one, covered with God. And then, as the clouds of glory rest upon Israel, Sukkot, that's the holiday of absolute happiness, where we now we're just resting with God's Presence upon us.

And so, in more than a year hosting this fellowship, we've never done anything like this before, we never needed to. But now, there's a pressing need and at that time, right now, an amazing coincidence, an amazing providence, an amazing guidance. So many people have asked from the fellowship, how they can participate and help more with our work in Israel, especially after this vineyard fiasco. And so, there's an ancient Israelite tradition to give an offering before Yom Kippur, a type of sacrifice, a giving toward the Temple. We now have a little more than 30 sheep. Some are lambs and some are fully grown. Five have already been offered to us by Lisa and Dan. These sheep are quite literally a gift to the Land of Israel. And when I think about it, it's the closest thing that I can think of to offering a sheep up to the Temple in Jerusalem. How much closer can we get than that? So, if you would like to help us purchase these sheep that are currently on our farm, we'll send out a link, and perhaps you can prayerfully consider making your Yom Kippur offering to help us purchase these sheep for the Arugot Farm and help us secure our Land all around us. I think it's an absolutely unique and a once in a lifetime offering to give this gift before Yom Kippur on this Shmitta year where the sheep are guarding the Land while we can't plant it.



And so, be blessed this year. May we taste the goodness of His oneness, to be totally covered, immersed and submerged. And just as the clouds of glory return to the camp of Israel, after the golden calf, the ultimate betrayal, on Yom Kippur, whatever has happened, may HaShem Presence rest in your home, with our children, with our marriage, with all of our loved ones. And so many of you have been separated from the Land of Israel for so long. But know that I and Tehila and Ari will be praying for you this Yom Kippur from this Land. And know that you are absolutely blessed from Zion.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

G'mar chatima tova (גָּמַר חֲתִימָה טוֹבָה) May you be sealed for good), my friends.