



Amir Tsarfati
Anchor Podcast with Jeff Cuozzo

<https://youtu.be/urUjD4XuuRg?si=QHY-EHW3g4KRWySI>



AMIR: Hey, Shalom everyone, I'm Amir Tsarfati and welcome to one more *Anchor Podcast* episode here. "Anchor" is because the hope that we have as in Hebrew 6:19 is an anchor to our soul. Indeed, that's the aim of these podcasts to bring you hope

in this very, very dark world. And together with me today is my good friend, Jeff Cuozzo from the UK.

JEFF: The UK. Yeah.

AMIR: Yes, and Jeff, first of all, welcome [Gesture: Amir and Jeff shake hands] to the *Anchor Podcast*. I've had you before here. In fact, one of our first podcasts when we opened CONNECT was about the whole genocide, if you remember, a fake narrative when the war in Gaza was in its early stages, and they already then cried out about that. You were here with Tommy...

JEFF: ...Fredwell

AMIR: Fredwell, Pastor Tommy Fredwell from the UK as well. But you're here because something very new and exciting is going on with you in your life right now. But before we do that, first of all, why don't we start with a prayer? And then we'll dive into your life story, which is amazing.

So Father, we thank You so much for Your amazing work in us, through us and with us. And now I ask that You will preside over this broadcast today and bring not only information, but also much hope and encouragement through the story that Jeff is going to share with us as how You work in him, and through him and his family, and the amazing connection that You put

between him and the people of Israel and the land of Israel. So we pray now, Father, that You will bless this time and bless not only the speakers, but also all the thousands and thousands of listeners and people that are watching this today. We ask that in Yeshua's name. Amen.

JEFF: Amen.

AMIR: Jeff, my friend, we've known each other for almost 16 years.

JEFF: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, when I was five, I think. [Laughter]

JEFF: Yeah, that's right. Me too!

AMIR: Yeah, there you go. We were five when we got... And so, you know, you're an American person born in Joysey? [New Jersey spoken with their accent]

JEFF: In Jersey.

AMIR: Jersey.

JEFF: Forget about it. [Jersey joke!]

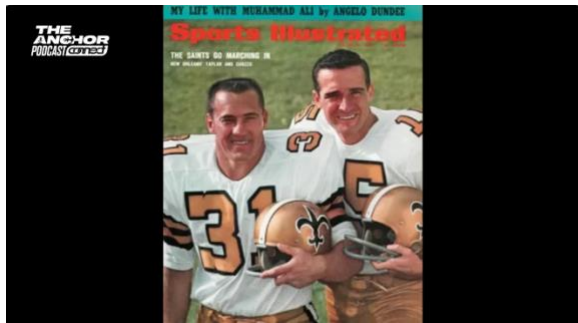
AMIR: Forget about it. And yet here you are, a Jersey guy, lives in the UK, and ministers in Israel and to the people of Israel. So that's quite a very, very unusual thing. So tell us first your journey of faith. From someone who was born to a Catholic family in New Jersey, what brought you to the Lord and eventually to where you are today?



JEFF: Well, I think it's, thanks, Amir, I appreciate it. And you know, I think the thing to probably bring up when you say that about being born into a Catholic family, I think I need to start with probably telling

you a little bit of my dad's story because that's what kind of connects to where I came from and obviously just in my faith. And specifically, my dad had played 10 years in the NFL. And it was

in his early days, he'd grown up a New Jersey, Italian, Catholic, just a devout believer in God, loved God.



AMIR: So a professional football player.

JEFF: That's right. Yeah, he was a quarterback for the Baltimore Colts and the New Orleans Saints in their expansion year, the Minnesota Vikings, and then the St. Louis Cardinals as he finished. But

what happened was it was when he was with the Baltimore Colts, his one of his roommates, his roommate was Raymond Berry, who was a Hall of Fame wide receiver and they became good friends. And he would see Raymond writing in his Bible and underlining things. Now, my dad during training camp would go to Mass every day just to make sure he's getting into heaven by checking boxes, then he's going to get in, and he's that kind of diligent. He was going to do that. But he sees this difference in this guy. And there was one day where he finally asked the question, he goes, "What's different about you?" And it was that which gave Raymond the open door and the opportunity to share, really grace, with my father, specifically Ephesians 2:8 and 9, that you're saved by grace through faith and not works. And then he also shared with him from Isaiah about all of your righteousness being like filthy rags. And for my dad, he's like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, you've just cut my legs out from under me." Like that was everything I was counting on getting into heaven.

And he had some other things that happened in his life at that time. Another gentleman by the name of Carroll Dale played for the Green Bay Packers at that time, had been praying for my dad, and just my dad saw something different in these men and realized they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ through, again, the grace. And that's what brought us as a family,

really. Because my dad came to faith, was born again, and understood that he couldn't work his way to heaven. He couldn't do enough, but that also now would translate into our home where we would grow up in a Christian home going to church. And that's kind of what happened. We were believers. I was six years old when we went to a Word of Life camp in Schroon Lake, New York, and just shared something very simple with me. It was, "Your heart's dirty and Jesus can make it clean." And as a six-year-old, I was like, "All right!"

AMIR: I'll take it!

JEFF: Yeah, I mean, and again, I hope my theology's grown a little bit, but actually it's still that simple, that, yeah, I am a sinner, and I can only be saved by His grace. And again, it's the understanding that in all my sin, He has forgiven me. And so for me growing up, I was a Christian kid trying to be a good kid. I was trying to be a good kid. We went to church. I played American football. I played as a quarterback myself. And I would have on my towel Philippians 4:13, and I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. And I had a poster in my locker about Isaiah 40:31, about soaring on wings like eagles. So I was trying to be a good guy, but the fact was I didn't know my Bible. Like I just, you know, we went to a Bible teaching...

AMIR: ...You quoted the right verses; you had the right sticker...

JEFF: ...I had a few things. I had a few things. I knew a few stories. I knew Bible stories. We went to Sunday school. But I had never really learned my Bible.

AMIR: Which is, by the way, the state of most people that call themselves Christians, if you really think about it. They know of the Scriptures. They know a few stories. But their knowledge of the Bible is not that...

JEFF: Yeah. I have to be very honest. I hadn't really read my Bible. I mean, like I said, we read verses and passages and stories. But I hadn't said, "Oh, let me read through the Gospel of John"

or, just hadn't done that. And that's to my own shame in that way. But at the same time, I find that, you know, I also definitely didn't know the Old Testament. Like definitely didn't know that. And that's important to the story. Because what happened was I end up now at university, and we had tragedy in our home. I was 18 years old. My brother was 22 years old. And he was shot and killed in a drug deal. And that was devastating to us as a family. Now, I literally was about to go off to university a month and a half later. But right before I go off to university, I'm playing in an all-star game, American football, in New Jersey and I tear up my knee. I do damage to my knee. And I have to have two knee surgeries because they missed a piece. So it's just a kind of devastating time that whole summer.

And then it was off to university, like to live on my own for the first time. Now, looking back, I was like, I probably needed some counseling. But, you know, just at that time in our day, that wasn't really a thing. And so you just thought, all right, just grin and bear it. Get up, you know, get yourself stronger. And then and so for me, I didn't I didn't get in fellowship when I was at university. I was just trying to fit in at this point. I was hurting. I didn't know where I was at really. And it was through those four years of university that I saw the Lord drawing me to Himself. I started to make some Christian friends, which was huge. That helped a ton. And it was also a grieving process. Like I had to come to grips with something I think is really important in it, and there might be some who can really relate to this, having hurt so bad with the loss of my brother, I found myself building walls around myself because I didn't want to hurt that way again. And so with that, I started to protect myself.

AMIR: Were you close to your brother?



JEFF: Yeah, I looked up to him. He was, he was amazing. He was a star athlete, cool guy. Right? And just all this. And so for me, it just was a devastation that I just found, like, I don't want to

hurt in this way again. So I just have to protect myself. I have to be strong for my parents. And I've been given some of that kind of counsel. And it was like, but I found myself hurting so bad. And so the problem with building walls around ourselves to "protect" ourselves is we also become very isolated. And I was, I was alone. I was hurting. And I remember coming home one time and I just told my sister, came home from university and I said, "I'm really sad." She's like, "You know, that's okay." And I was like, [Noise: something washing over him] and then just like that was the beginning of just really healing and grieving and being able to just kind of...

AMIR: ...You have to acknowledge first that you are sad. And you have to hear that it's okay.

JEFF: Yeah, it's okay to grieve. It's okay, to...you need to. And that was helpful because then, now I did start to grow and I did start to, like I said, find believing friends and did get some fellowship. And there were things that were happening. And by my fourth year at university, at the University of Virginia, I actually had Christian roommates, and we were having an accountability group every week. And we would talk through life issues. And it was amazing. It was incredible.

Now, just to be clear, I was on a path. My path of schooling was communications. So I was thinking I was going to go into broadcasting. Go figure. [Laughter] Because I never thought I'd be doing this now! But yeah, so what happened was I was, because I'd been around sports my whole life, and so for whatever reason, I had this idea that "I'm going to be the guy when they say, let's

go down to the field and get an update. I'll be that guy." I don't know why I came up with this idea, but I thought that sounds fun. I interned at a sports radio station in DC right before I graduated, and I didn't love it. And the reason was because I felt like I was in a place where I was having to, like, almost like a leech... like I had to find out things. And it was the summer that Michael Jordan's father was shot and killed. And they had me calling the Bulls organization to ask Michael how he's feeling. And I'm thinking, I don't think we need to do that. I think we know he's not doing that.. Oh, my goodness. This isn't me. This isn't what I want to be.

AMIR: You found out that's the side of you that loves communication is not exactly that great.

JEFF: Yeah. I wasn't not an investigative reporter trying to get the scoop, trying to find out the dirt or whatever that just was like, oh, no, no, no. I don't want to be on the outside bothering people. So the only thought was, well, maybe there's an ability to possibly be more positive because I always wanted to be an encouraging and positive person. And so, the thought was maybe if I worked for, in sports still—I just always been around sports—and so I had actually a job lined up with the Minnesota Vikings to do public relations. I thought instead of being on the outside kind of critiquing, I could be on the inside promoting. I could be positive and encouraging. And that's where I was going. That was the plan as I graduated university only to then go visit a friend in California. Bubba, our friend Bubba. He was at Bible college, and he was there, and my parents said, "Oh, there's a youth pastors conference. You should go." Now I've been working with youth. I've been doing some Young Life stuff at university. And so I said, "Oh, that sounds fun." California. Right? And of course we land, and they immediately take me to In-N-Out Burger. [AMIR: Of course] So I'm like, I like California. At that point, I was like, "Yeah!" But besides that, I just started to see something, Amir, that I had never seen in my life. I was like, [speaking in a soft tone, he thought to himself:] "These people know Jesus. Like I want to know Jesus."

AMIR: You could see a difference.

JEFF: Saw a difference, immediately, at the Bible college there at Calvary Chapel Bible College. And what it was, it was two things I really identified. One, they knew Him because they knew His Word. They were studying from Genesis to Revelation. It was like, “Ahhh. This is the way.” I mean, ...

AMIR: ...That’s the way.

JEFF: It’s the written Word.

AMIR: Exactly.

JEFF: Yeah. You get to know the living Word through the written Word. And that was the one thing. And then the second thing had been it was the power of the Holy Spirit, clearly the power of the Holy Spirit in a way, though, that wasn’t bizarre. And that was important for me because we had grown up, my parents were hungry, and we’d gone to things and seen things, and some of it had really made me like, [Makes a noise: indicating uncomfortableness] “I’m not sure that’s me.” And so, I found myself just kind of steering clear of anything “Holy Spirit” related. But now I was like, wait, no, this is vital. Like we need the power of the Holy Spirit to live this life. Like God endowed us with power from on high to be His witnesses. Like we need this power. And seeing those two things, it changed the whole direction of my life because I found myself sitting there going, God, can I come here? And I just thought, who just said that? Because it couldn’t have been me because I had always thought school was the thing I did to get a job because I liked, let’s just say I liked the social aspect of school more than the studying part. [Laughter]

AMIR: Which is where you met Naomi also.



JEFF: Correct. So we end up at the Bible college and I'm there for a year. I can't get enough. I'm like a sponge. All I want to do is know the Word. I wasn't there to do ministry. I wasn't there to go into

being a pastor or anything else. I just wanted to know Jesus better. That was the heart behind it. But it was in that first year specifically of just coming to the sense that I thought, "Oh, I've grown up a Christian, but I didn't know any of this. That's not okay." Like I should have known these things. This would have helped so much through my high school years, through my university years, if I had really known the Word the way I should have. But then the other part was, yeah, a year into it. This young lady shows up from England.

AMIR: From England...

JEFF: There you go. [Laughter]

AMIR: That's—Although you do have English blood.

JEFF: That's true. My mom.

AMIR: Taylor?

JEFF: That's right.

AMIR: But now you meet your other half.

JEFF: Yes.

AMIR: Better half.

JEFF: Yes, definitely. Definitely. Absolutely.

AMIR: And God begins to work in you in a very interesting way. And the UK is now becoming a place of influence for you. And somehow God used that to connect you to Israel.



JEFF: Yes. So what happens is we get married. And we find ourselves in a situation where, that was one of the challenges of cross-cultural marriage, where are we supposed to live? Right?

This is we're in the US. We also felt like there's such a need in England just to teach the Word. Again, at my last semester in Bible college, I found myself reading John 21 and specifically feeling like God was calling me to ministry. Because here I was kind of that idea of like, how are they going to hear unless there's a preacher? And He was really calling me to feed His lambs, tend His sheep, feed His sheep, because I had a burden to see people—Because I felt myself like if I'd only known this, it would have helped me so much. Maybe I can help others. Maybe I can teach His Word and people will grow.

And so here we were. And we ended up in England. And we've done a little back and forth. We've been in the States, we've been in England. But nine years ago specifically, we did come back to the UK. And that's where we've been since then. But it was in the UK in one of those other times I was pastoring a church in the Lake District and I just became more and more aware of something that I hadn't really realized previously. I'm just a Bible teacher, right? I wasn't like



a pro-Israel guy. I was just a Bible teacher because it had just changed my life at 22 years old. From Genesis to Revelation, it changed me. Now I just wanted to encourage others with the Word. And in

that time, I started to understand, “Wait...,” like I was listening, and I heard on the BBC, like a very biased viewpoint when it came to—.

AMIR: Hello? BBC, I mean.

JEFF: Yeah, [Laughter] like it was Operation Cast Lead. I remember that very clearly around that time. And they were just putting out this message. I was like, wait, that's not actually—That's very one-sided. And it was very biased. And so I thought, oh, that's not okay. And then at the same time, I started to understand more and more how within the churches, how replacement theology, this concept that God is finished with the Jews and that He's actually replaced the promises that He's made to the Jewish people with the church. And I just thought, I know, like that's ingrained in the church. And so for me, it was an impetus of like, is there not a way to maybe at least give people another thought of like thinking about what does the Bible actually teach?

AMIR: So you're coming from this perspective of: "I'm not a political person. It's not even an area of interest for me. As a person who teaches the Bible, a person who knows the Bible teaches the Bible, I find it important to tell people about what's going on in Israel from that perspective."

JEFF: Yeah, that's right. That was it.

AMIR: And so I met you 16 years ago when I used to be a tour guide. I guided tours for Sar-El Tours and we operated the Joshua Fund annual tour. I think it was May or June every year and you brought multiple buses. And I was, I think, one of the lead guides over there. And you were part of the team, you and Jeremy Grafman and others. And I remember I was very impressed with you guys. We stayed friends. But I could see that you developed throughout that time in your life a great connection with ministries and ministry leaders in Israel.

JEFF: That's right.

AMIR: So tell us about that.

JEFF: Yeah. So that's what happened after I had been pastoring, and then that connection with the Joshua Fund, I ended up working here. I ended up working here for five years. We didn't live



in Israel, but I was here a lot. And as a family, that was something we just saw the need of being a part of something where we were actually encouraging the leaders, the believers here in the land. Now in those five years of working with the Joshua Fund,

what happened was I started to see a need that I was not aware of. And I don't know if many would have been, but because I was so close to things and getting to know people so well, and it specifically had to do with the young people. And obviously everyone knows it's compulsory military service here. 18 years old, two years for the girls, three years for the guys. And I remember we were doing an event here in the land and a young lady shared a story with me and we were a couple of guys, a couple of pastors were standing there and I just thought, "Oh my goodness." She basically was saying that she had been a believer going into the military just two years earlier and she made a list of like 50 of her friends, they were all believers. But two years later coming out of their two years of service, not one of them was walking with the Lord. And that for me was like, "Ugh... what? Like wait, hold on!" You know, it was like an arrow through my heart.

AMIR: Because in Israel, you leave your home, your congregation, and you go to, the first time in your life, to the place that now somebody else is responsible for you. And you're in the middle of an activity that is all about surviving and fighting to survive and you get to be exposed to all Israelis or all sorts and walks of life. And if you're not strong enough, actually it's them who pull you into their world rather than you pull them into yours. And they are those who provoke you to

jealousy rather than you provoking them to jealousy. And that's what you saw, basically. You saw this weak link and the need to address that.

JEFF: Yeah, it really broke my heart, if I'm honest. And it wasn't like I was seeking a burden. It just became one because once I knew about the need now, I just thought, I can't not do something to try and help. And specifically because I think to myself, "Wait, wait, you're believers in Yeshua, Jewish believers in Yeshua, living back in the land after 2,000 years, you found your Messiah and now you're falling through the chairs? Like you're falling away? Like, that's not okay. Like, no, no, no, no, please! You found the answer. Don't go." And that was the burden that started to really grow in my heart. And I was again, I was seeing this more and more, whether it was maybe just growing cold in their walk; they weren't in fellowship. They were like you described, they were just feeling very alone, or some maybe have blown it, maybe they've had some moral failure. Whatever it was, there was this sense of, I guess I'm done. I guess it's over. And you know how it is with the Israelis. Obviously when they finished their military, all they want to do—a big trip. They want to go somewhere. and do something just to get out of the pressure cooker of life here. And for me, the concept in my heart was, again, Naomi being English, us having the ability to be in the UK, the thought of maybe being a place outside the land where we could have a discipleship program that could help those and give them hope.

AMIR: So, for you working in one ministry, exposed you to the need that was not part of what you were in charge of and that gave birth to a new ministry that now you're fully on board with it. So obviously you're no longer with Joshua Fund. You began on a new path where what used to be a "sidekick" or what used to be something you did in your free time while doing other things now becomes your prime occupation. And that hope that you talked about, *Tikva*, in Hebrew, *Tikva*

became a ministry that is twofold, basically. Tell us—So you did talk about the need to somehow help those who are right after the military service, but talk to us more about that.

JEFF: Yeah. So again, why that word, you mentioned *Tikva*, the word for hope in Hebrew, Jeremiah 29:11 was the verse, right? My thoughts towards your peace and not evil to give you a future and a *Tikva*, future and a hope. And that's true for those young people. And that was my burden for them. But then the other part, having been in ministry myself as a pastor, as one who's planted churches, as one who is raising a family in ministry, I know the stresses and the and the woes and the ups and the downs and everything that comes with it.

AMIR: Really? The stress in ministry in Israel? Really? [Sarcasm]

JEFF: Go figure, believe it or not. And so that was the other side. There was another part of this, become a twofold vision for the ministry of caring for and ministering to the believers here in the land, and that's to do with the ministry leaders and their families, because you just see that it can be absolutely exhausting. And again, whether you chalk it up to six-day work weeks and life in Israel is hard and all those things. Yes. But there's a spiritual battle as well and opposition that comes from within the culture. And there's so many things that the ministry leaders are dealing with here. And I just saw, I'm like, oh, man. We've known the times when somebody's done something, a cup of cold water to us in our life as ministry leaders. I thought, "Man, is there a way that we can also provide a place where those who are in ministry can come away with, no obligations—they're not being asked to do this or do that—just come with no obligations." You come with your kids, you spend time with your family, and you really have an ability to just be refreshed, encouraged, strengthened, counsel, whatever was needed. And that's where the twofold vision of Tikvah, of the whole...

AMIR: So literally, serving them.

JEFF: Yeah. Like... just, Hope Israel is kind of what we've come to with a name because it's like



this idea of there's a need for hope in this place, both for those in ministry. So, yes, serving the servants. That's kind of the heart of the whole thing. And so, for me, that's really where we get to, is now we've been able to be a place where young people

can come away. I mean, you've had the experience.

AMIR: I was the one who flew with Ariel, my son, to kickstart his 40-days program right after his military service. And he can attest to the fact that it was a super meaningful time for him in his walk with the Lord, and in his life in general. His military service was not easy. And he was very blessed by it. So, I mean, I can attest firsthand as a parent that this was—And I think it was your first...

JEFF: ...Yes, it was.

AMIR: Your first ever Tikvah.

JEFF: Yeah. And like you said, we saw the blessing of being able to provide a place. And it was so encouraging to have this opportunity to see this come to fruition in light of knowing the need. Now, we were excited because this was happening and then we got to this year of 2020.

AMIR: Yeah. What was so different about that year? [Sarcasm]

JEFF: Something happened there. I can't remember. [Laughter]

AMIR: I think something—Oh, small. Very small.

JEFF: Yeah, the world came to a standstill. That's right. Yeah. So it really made it more challenging in that season. But at the same time, you and I had developed a stronger relationship during that time, and we worked together doing stuff here and with Behold Israel, and it was a

blessing for me to be able to encourage young people. But we also were able to do something which was such an encouragement to me, having prayed that prayer all those years ago to try and bring a message to the people in the UK. And so, with you coming over to the UK and having a conference in Oxford back in 2022...

AMIR: Correct.

JEFF: ...we had the chance to just really present another way for people. And I pray that that continues to happen for people that they understand, “Wait, we’ve been fed something, but that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s the only thing. There’s actually a different way.” And that’s the biblical way that God is not done with the nation of Israel, and that He’s made covenant with this nation, and He’s going to keep His covenants because He’s faithful and true. And so that’s been



so important. Now, for us now in these years, these last three years specifically, since all the stuff that did take place with the world shutting down, we’ve now been able to have families and we’ve been doing couples retreats, which has been amazing for

Israeli couples to be able to come over. We’ve been able to do leadership retreats for those who are leading ministries to have their team come with them and to be able to just be an encouragement or refreshment to them, or worship leaders retreat.

AMIR: So apart from bringing post-military young people for those 40-day program, you’re ministering to couples, to leaders, to ministries in Israel.

JEFF: Yeah, that’s, as I said, kind of that two-fold ministry is, yes, we’re having the discipleship program for the young people seeing that as absolutely essential and so needed. But at the exact same time, just as important, just as vital, is this need to encourage and strengthen ministries.

AMIR: Yes, and this is where I think we get to October 7, 2023, where I don't think that need disappeared, but quite the opposite. Tell us how October 7th basically changed things in you and in how you see things and how you took things to the next level in your ministry.

JEFF: Yeah, so yes, as we've alluded to, this was a need already for Israeli believers and leaders to have this time of refreshment, of encouragement. But since October 7th, the level of anxiety that Israelis are living under, [Gesture: Hand raised eye level] even in these few days that we've been here in country, we've had to go to a bomb shelter in the middle of the night, and that's just reality of life now. And so everyone is just living under this just constant stress, this constant anxiety. And you just see it's kind of become not just an option, but almost essential to have a time to be refreshed, to be encouraged. And we see it in the ministry leaders too, because they're caring for all the people who are hurting, and they're giving, giving, giving, giving, giving themselves to make sure everybody's okay as shepherds, as pastors. But now, as again, we were saying earlier, but we want to serve those who are serving. So we want to minister to those who are ministering, and so we have that opportunity to have them come away and be encouraged themselves. I mean, let me just give you an example. We had a family come back in May of this year, of 2025. And when their kids got on the plane, and this just kind of gives you a sense of it, when their kids got on the plane, they said to their parents, "What do we do if a siren goes off while we're on the plane?" Like, that's just their, that's their life. They don't understand, you know, I mean, they didn't, they can't comprehend as young kids.

AMIR: I know.

JEFF: And so that was something very, like that kind of impacted me when they told that, because that's what you realize. These children are really... and we have some friends and different people that we know who have really struggled during this time, and just our heart breaks for that even

more. And so we want to provide any kind of encouragement, any kind of counseling, anything that's possible to minister to that need that people are, that are experiencing during this time. Because, you know, we could say, you know, people might have PTSD, but the truth is, it's not even, there's no "P" yet.

AMIR: It's no P yet. Exactly. It's not "post;" we're going through it.

JEFF: It's still...

AMIR: ...And I think that more and more Israelis are at the point where they admit that they go through it, and also that they need help. There's a very, very famous comedian in Israel right now. And then last night I watched for the first time, he admitted on stage that he is suffering from PTSD from his early military age. But it's gone worse since October 7th. But he also encouraged people to not hide it, but to talk about it, and address it and ask for help.

JEFF: That's a challenge in this culture, isn't it? Because it's a culture of we just have to bear up under it and be strong and keep going. And I think that...

AMIR: And I think that Christians have the—I think they have *double* portion of that "We are strong", because not only "We are strong as Israelis, but we are also strong as believers." You know, "We have the Holy Spirit, we have the Word, we have the truth. So we are strong, He is our strength." And so, it's even more difficult for them to admit that they need help and that they need encouragement. And so here you are...

JEFF: ...Yeah, and it has been encouraging that more and more there is that awareness, there's that understanding, and there's that desire to say, "Okay, I need to make sure I'm looking after myself." Because sustainability, like if you're going to be able to minister to others, you first need to partake before you can impart. And if you're going to be able to minister to others, you need to make sure you're doing okay and that you're being cared for and that the Lord... One upside, and

this is maybe a bit of an aside from the whole story, Amir, but one thing that we have seen is that because of what you said about just Israelis as a whole kind of really struggling, like there's more and more of an openness to the gospel that we have seen within the land, which is encouraging. That's the—You know, you see the Lord working all things together for good. This has been brutal, no question, and still is, because when people really understand the culture and the way things are here in Israel, they realize it's such a small country. Everybody knows somebody who's been adversely impacted in one way or another from October 7th, and even through the war and everything. And so everybody's hurting in one way or another.

AMIR: I mean, we, for the most part, this war, we managed to dodge the bullets and the rockets and the drones. But then, a few soldiers were killed that we knew their families. And as of a few weeks ago, the best friend of our son was killed in Gaza, and that affected him a lot. And so it finally got to our household, and he was a frequent visitor in our house. I mean, someone who has been to our house many, many, many, many times. So as you said, I don't think there's a single family that is not somehow related to either the actual massacre or know someone who went through it. In fact, even here, the team that we hired to clean CONNECT is a person who survived the Nova Festival massacre there. And I mean, he's a great guy, he does a great job, and we feel very blessed to be able to provide that work for him. So again, it's everywhere.

JEFF: You know, there's another interesting piece to this too, when it comes to the anxiety and it comes to the discouragement that is upon people is when they find out that people around the world have an animosity towards them, it's like, "Wait, what did we do? How are we the bad guys when we were attacked, we didn't provoke, we were not trying to take over anybody. We're trying to live at peace and yet this is coming at us."

AMIR: The people that want to annihilate us and they don't even hide it are the people who are getting the sympathy from the world. And us who were massacred, the moment we begin to defend ourselves, we are the aggressors. I mean, and again, I've said it to many people, I think that the problem of the progressive-liberal left is that they have a hard time admitting that they're supporting monsters. And so they have to make us the monsters in order to live with what they believe, because otherwise, the other side, it doesn't make them look good. Because they are always those who take care of the weak and the good and the oppressed. And so what's more important than to paint the other side as the villain and the aggressor and as the Goliath in this story?

JEFF: Yeah, so we continue to want to be that encouragement, that place of refreshment, a place of rest.

AMIR: So basically, you left Joshua Fund because you followed your calling to go full time with that specific calling of bringing hope, especially in those two areas. And *Tikva*, hope, is that project that you basically take post-military believers to refresh them and to basically rekindle.

JEFF: Yeah, a great picture for me in my heart is what it says about the Lord in Isaiah, where it says, "A bruised reed He will not break, and the smoking flax He will not quench" And I just love that picture because it's almost like you just see this where you have this little smoking flax and it's like the Lord is like trying [blows like restarting a fire] to breathe life once again, get that fire burning once again. And that's how I feel a lot of these young people are. They're that bruised reed, they're that smoking flax. They're like hanging on for dear life. And it's like, "Lord, help us to be an encouragement to them where they can thrive and really do well once again, not just survive, but really thrive." And that's the prayer. And so, again, it's from Isaiah where he talks about in Isaiah 49, just the idea of gathering His people, restoring them, and then raising them back

up to come back to the land, and be a blessing and to be an encouragement to the body here, and to strengthen and encourage other believers in the land as well as they've been encouraged themselves to now come back and be that.

AMIR: And how is this country and what you see now all around you, how does that encourage you?

JEFF: Well, I think what I see is that God is faithful. He made promises and He is going to keep His promises. I mean, again, I said it earlier, but like just the nation of Israel being a nation, the fact that you and I are sitting here today is a fulfillment of His promises. Ezekiel 36 and 37; 2,000 years without a homeland, can a nation be born in a day? Apparently it can.

AMIR: Absolutely.

JEFF: And He is going to breed life into those dry bones, and He is going to bring new life. He's the One who takes that which is dead and makes it alive. He did it with Abraham and Sarah and He's been doing it ever since. And of course, we know He rose from the grave, and He showed us that He is the conqueror of death. And so for me, that's what we get to see. We have a living example of God's faithfulness right before us with the nation of Israel being established once again. And the fact that, as Revelation tells us, there's going to be Jewish people living in the land of Israel in the city of Jerusalem and He's going to return to this place. And that just builds my faith like crazy because we have that promise that He made all those thousands of years, 2,500 years ago to Ezekiel. Yet here we are living it.

AMIR: Absolutely. And that's why, you know, *Exploring Ezekiel*, it's right behind me. It's the new book that I just wrote.

JEFF: I'm glad I could get you a plug in there. [Laughter]

AMIR: No, I'm just saying these are the days of Ezekiel. I think we need to talk about it, and we need to make sure people understand that we are not foreign people in foreign land. We are the people to whom this land was promised and to where God brought us. It's not even our thing. He did it. And as He said in Ezekiel 37, "I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it." It's His work.

JEFF: So you know that I've done it.

AMIR: Exactly. And so, for us to be here and to live here and right behind you is so nice and surreal, and the serenity and the thing is this, the enemy is still out there plotting to destroy us. But God is here to protect us. And *Am Israel Chai*, the people of Israel are alive. And thankfully God has put on people's hearts, people like you and your family, the need to minister to us.

JEFF: You know, there's something, Amir, that Naomi and I in our first year of marriage, we went through a book, the *Experiencing God*, by Henry Blackaby. And in that book, one of the things that was so clear was it's not up to us to try and make up stuff that God should bless. It's about how are you aligning yourself with what God's doing. And that's been our heart ever since. And as I study, as I said, from Genesis to Revelation, this is God. This is His plans. And I want to make sure, we want to make sure as a couple, as a family, that we're aligning ourselves with God's promises. I want to be on His side. I want to be on His team. He's the winner. He's the one who's done this. And you can try and fight against it. You can argue against it. You can try and find fault. And again, are people perfect? No way. Is government perfect? No way. But God is. And He is going to accomplish His purposes. And I believe that the more we are willing to embrace that and accept that and really align ourselves with His plans and His purposes, we're going to see Him do great and weighty things which we don't even know.

AMIR: Absolutely. And I think we live in amazing prophetic times. And if there is a time to not just watch what God is doing, but to stand for it and be part of it, now is the time.

JEFF: Yeah.

AMIR: And so basically, Jeff, Hope Israel is now a...

JEFF: .com

AMIR: Hopeisrael.com Now it's a ministry that is a nonprofit that is registered in the United States as a 501(c)(3). And people can support you and your important work and help you guys. And by helping you, it's basically helping the local believers here in those two aspects that are often being forgotten.

JEFF: And you hear, and as you hear the testimonies of those who've been with us, that's exactly what you hear. They are the first ones to say, "Hey, listen, if you're wanting to help Israel and serve us, this is something that is so vital for us." Like, you know, a lot of times people think, "Oh, we need to do this project or that project." But if the people who are doing the projects are flaming out or failing or falling down, then there's no projects to support. Like you need to encourage and support and strengthen the actual people who are serving in the land. And that's where we've seen the value of this ministry. So when you support something like this, you are genuinely supporting those who are doing the work, which is absolutely essential and vital for them.

AMIR: So God has prepared your way. He walked before you to lead you to all of this by first connecting you with this whole BBC thing that made you think, "Ooh, that's not right." And then all the way to the point where you worked for two Israeli-based organizations that one is more catering to the locals, and one is more catering to the world to explain about Israel. And now finally you're on your own doing what God is leading you at this point and it's Tikvah. It is, of course, Hope Israel. And again, hopeisrael.com is how people can find more about you guys and how they can help and pray and support.

JEFF: Yeah, we're grateful. We're grateful for that consistent support. It just allows us to know that we can keep going and keep doing this.

AMIR: And it's a small family operation.

JEFF: Well, here's the reality of that, and here's the reason: trust is so important. Especially in these days and age, even so, because of the length of time and relationship that we've established over the years with all our brothers and sisters here in the land.

AMIR: I think you know more about what's going on in the local body of Christ here than I do.

JEFF: Possibly. [Laughter]

AMIR: No, I know that for a fact. And that's the great thing. You know them personally. You know them. You've been...

JEFF: ...Trust is essential.

AMIR: Yeah. And that's the key, and because there is trust, then they could expose the need.

JEFF: Yeah. Well, that's exactly what's... that's the uniqueness too. And I think you know this as well. It's a small body.

AMIR: It is.

JEFF: And so, people don't like to share too much because it gets around pretty fast, you know, and that's where... that is the blessing. And that has been the benefit of being a pastor and being a brother who and Naomi, both of us being able to be a couple that can care for our brothers and sisters here because there's a willingness to share hearts because they know it's not going any further. There's a confidentiality. There's an encouragement that we can bring them without them feeling like, "Uh oh, this is going to, you know, go somewhere or get back to somebody." No, we're going to, we're going to love them and care for them and pray for them and be there for them without there being any sense of repercussions, which is really important.

AMIR: You know, in Romans 15, Paul is talking about the duty of the Gentile believers to help the saints which are in Jerusalem, which is synonymous to the local believers through which God actually used to share the gospel to the whole world. And I do see that, I do see the importance and the need to not just come and see the land, but also see the people of God in the land, and the ministries that are in the land. People either fall into replacement theology where Israel is no longer important to them, or they fall into the dual covenant that God has it... God has another different covenant with the Jewish people.

JEFF: And yet here as Israelis, you and I know that anybody in Israel would say, any believer in Israel would say, "There is one Name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

AMIR: Absolutely. And that's the thing. And so, what we need is to see believers from around the world acknowledging the fact, (a) God is not done with Israel; and (b) there is no other Name as you said by which one can be healed or saved.

So, Jeff, thank you for being with us today. And again, I want to remind everyone, hopeisrael.com is where you can find more information about this amazing new ministry that is not doing a new thing. He's been doing that for a while, but now he's embarking on an independent road all by himself as a family, but with God's blessing upon it. And if you want to take part in it and help, hopeisrael.com, it's a 501(c)(3), it's a tax deductible. How do you...

JEFF: ...Yeah, yeah, tax deductible. Yeah, yeah, yeah...

AMIR: Tax deductible donations. And I want to thank you, Jeff, for being here today. [Gesture: Amir and Jeff shake hands] And I hope that you can share this podcast with as many as you can. The need is there. But also, I think we could be very encouraged from listening to the life journey of Jeff, how he came to know Yeshua as his personal Lord and Savior. And also, how important it is not just to know of the Bible, but to know *the* Bible. Because knowing the written Word will

obviously give you finally an intimate knowledge of the living Word. So thank you for watching.

God bless you. And Shalom from Galilee.

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