

Session 202

Lech Lecha – The Beauty of a Test

10 November 2024

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3C_qMldxmU

Ari

Shalom, shalom, good to see everybody, good to see all of you. Hi Leah, I can see only you now, only you. And Karen, good to see you. Arnos and Rigrot, hi! Can you wave to me? Good to see you, but I think Arnos ...oh, your face is blurred. Anyways, good to see all of you. I don't know about you guys, but my head is spinning. I'm sitting here talking to Tehila as we're going into it and I'm like...half of the time, I don't know even what to ...there's so much on my heart, my head is spinning. And Tehila's like, "We all love each other here in this Fellowship. Everybody loves you, Ari. It's ok, it doesn't always need to be great. You just need to share your heart." And that's like what I'm trying to do.

But I feel like some of you are really prophets in that when I'm going through struggles, because we all do, me included, big time...you tend to always turn to me and say, "How are you, Ari, what's going on? I want to encourage you, I want to strengthen you." I don't know how all of you know it, but I really appreciate it. Anyways, my head is spinning. It seems like the world is changing so fast, so many massive, consequential shifts. If I had to call it anything, I would call it, as if the world is going through like birth pangs. That's what it feels like to me – birth pangs of Mashiach.

And are you guys ready for another prediction? I know, I know, I know. I've made a lot of predictions, but we are there. We are in the final days because while so many seem to be breathing a sigh of relief that Trump was elected, and the forces of goodness have a new found sense of strength and clarity and deterrence, there is still three months before Trump actually becomes president and a lot can happen in those three months. I believe a lot will happen in those three months. North Korea is provoking South Korea more than it has in decades, same with China and Taiwan – in like the 50 years there haven't been so many flyovers from China in Taiwanese air space. Iran and their proxies are definitely stirring something up. And for me it's simply a stretch to imagine that the tinderbox of the Middle East, the tinder box of the entire world won't ignite in the next few months where every rogue nation is just maximally incentivized to do their thing.

Jeremy

Only there are so many times, Ari, that you can pull this card. There's only so many times.

Ari

No, who said that? Who is giving me a limitation on how many times I can do that?

Jeremy

I'm saying that you have a five year limitation and you're like at four years and six months. After this upcoming fifth year, you have to be like, "Alright guys, I'm not going to be calling for the end of the world, I'm just going to say Mashiach is coming."

Ari

Ok, fine, I'll make that deal, but I'll also let you know that when the time comes and Mashiach does come, I'm going to be mentally prepared and ready and YOU oh Jeremy of great doubt, will not be prepared.

Jeremy

I'm not saying that I don't doubt, I'm just saying that I doubt that it necessarily has to come with a giant war. Maybe the giant war is already happening.

Ari

I understand, but I stand only to lose by saying actual timelines – the next three months. I only stand to lose by doing that.

Jeremy

That's what makes it fun to be your friend.

Ari

I guess so, I guess so. I'm just going to be going around the Farm over the next three months, blasting the shofar over the hills of Judea. And you know what? I actually really believe that each time I do that, it changes the fabric of reality. But anyways, like I said, you know, I've been wrong before, but what I'm not wrong about is that we are in times of tremendous testing. We all feel it, I think we all feel it. Do you guys feel it? Like we're being tested right now? We're being tested on individual levels, on national levels, and just a level of humanity as a whole – mankind is being tested. And that's what I want to focus on during this Fellowship. I want to focus on the tests that God is presenting us with today, both in our personal lives. And my friends, I'm reading Ardelle's prayer packet and I appreciate you guys submitting your prayer requests and I encourage those of you who don't, to submit them. They are read, they are prayed for and I know...we know that you are all facing tremendous challenges in your personal lives. It's heavy. It's real. And you are facing up to those tests with inspirational faith, really. You guys give me more strength than you could know.

But while we are each dealing with the personal challenges that we're all facing to one degree or another, both Israel and the entire world are faced with tests of historic magnitude. And that's what I want to talk about. But before I do, allow me to introduce Tehila to share her unique wisdom with all of you.

Jeremy

Well, that's awesome, I didn't know that Tehila was coming on tonight. That's exciting. I always love it when Tehila comes on. Hey, chamuda, that is so happy that you're here.

Tehila

Hi, does everybody hear me? First of all, it's great to see everybody. Before I go into a little Torah about the parsha, about the Torah portion, I actually wanted to address something personal. Tabitha, this is not to go out to everybody. This is just for our friends here. So two weeks ago I spoke about Noach. And I gave the little kind of idea that Jeremy and I would later know to be "Your best could be better" Torah, where I talked about Noach, even though he was the best in his generation, he was challenged to make his best even better and fill his life with kindness on the ark.

Now, what's so funny about me and that whole Torah was that after giving that Torah, I was so...Jeremy what would be the word? I was so filled with self-doubt. I said, "Oh, gosh, that was the worst. My best could have been better." I actually was really worried about my best not being good enough. Jeremy was like, "It's fine," but I was like, "Oh, but I should have made that point and I should have made that point. Ugh...my best should have been better." Jeremy was like, "Oh, you did your best." And it was a really funny kind of time together of that Torah.

And then I'm busy walking around for two weeks feeling like my best should have been better and then I get last night the most amazing message from one of our...seriously old-time, beloved members, Charlene. And I just have to read it to you guys because it was exactly what I needed to hear when I was filled with self-doubt. And she said...

"I started asking HaShem to help me make my best better. And not long after I prayed it the first time, I had several things happen, one after another, and I realized that HaShem wanted to see how I was responding. And after the third time, I said, "Oh, these were opportunities to make my best better!" And I failed the first several times and I thought, "Ok, I should keep on praying for this," and I can gladly tell you now that I am making progress and see the opportunity as it comes. And I choose how to respond and not just to react. Fine-tuning my best, making it better."

Is that amazing? And that was just so cool, and I appreciated that feedback so much because it really touched on that effort that I've been trying to make with everything that's going on and on, trying to just ask HaShem, "Open my eyes because I know the opportunities are there. Somehow, I'm just missing them. And if I could just see them, I might still fail! But maybe if I keep on trying and I keep on seeing them, I'm going to see those opportunities to get better.

I was so excited to read that message, and Charlene, you made me feel like my best was also ok, so I wanted to thank you for that. Ok, that was just for our private consumption. What Jeremy?

Jeremy

I was just going to say that that was exactly because I live in the shadow of your Bubi who is the most wonderful woman who would write a book. And I couldn't have been prouder because that seems to be the Jewish way. And so, I'm like, I'm in a constant game to impress my wife, Tehila. I'm like, "Tehila, I'm going to settle the deepest settlement in Judea in the mountains of King David. That's the best that I can do." And she's like, "Your best can be better." And I'm like, "Tehila, I'm going to do a Fellowship and I'm going to invite families from around the world. We're going to do a House of Prayer for all nations! And Zoom" And she's like, "Zoom? Your best could be better." And I'm constantly always living with that. So I now have a dvar Torah that is exactly that.

Tehila

I tell you...wait, I tell you "Your best could be better" because I believe in how best your best really is. Because to say "your best could be better" is a sign of me knowing all of the potential that's inside. And if you would just actually listen to me once in a while, you would fulfill that potential. But wait, let me finish my dvar Torah, now is the real dvar Torah. All of that was the silly banter and seeing the back scenes. The back scenes of the Gimpel dysfunction. Ok. And how awesome our Fellowship members are and encouraging all of the time. Charlene, you're not the dysfunction, it's us.

Ok, Tabitha, now we can get it rolling. So now's the real Torah. So this week's Torah portion that we're reading is Vayera. And one of the striking and memorable events that we have in this Torah portion is the destruction of Sedom. Now we often ask ourselves, "What did Sedom do that was so bad so as to deserve to be destroyed?" Because it's not like it's the first time we're encountering evil since the flood. We see horrible things happening to Avraham in Egypt and kidnapping and we've discussed these things. It's not like the world is perfect. What was the unique darkness of Sedom?

Now it's not really clear from the Bible itself, there are sort of hints and the story when the angels come to Lot's house, we can kind of pick up that there were certain types of improprieties. Kids are watching, I won't go into too much detail. But you know a certain type of improprieties, lack of modesty, to make the understatement of the century. So maybe that was their sin, right? Because of the types of things that were going on around there.

Another thing that you could kind of see hinted at was just really being not nice to the guests, some of the Midrashic traditions try to connect it to the war between the four kings and the five kings. It's not really clear, though. And there's so many different theories and stories, but one of them this week just jumped out at me. And that's one of the descriptions of the sinfulness of Sedom that appears in the Babylonian Talmud, in Tractate Sanhedrin, page 109B. The story is given there just in sort of bare bones form and then it gets elaborated in later Midrashic

traditions until it becomes really like colorful and awful. But one of the really...there are actually two striking stories there and I'll tell you them.

The first one is that when people would come to Sodom, if a poor person would come to Sodom, now I know what you're thinking. You're probably thinking, "The people of Sodom were really ungenerous to the poor, right?" You'd be like, "Oh, they're really awful. They don't give any charity to the poor." That's not what the Talmud tells us. The Talmud tells us something way darker. And I think...and I'm going to try to see how we can connect this to the incredibly fascinating times that we're living in.

So the Midrash is really dark. And it says that when a poor person would come, all the people would come out and give them gold and silver coins, they would give them money. Now, you're looking and thinking, "Well, that sounds really nice." But here's the thing. In the laws of Sodom, they had a law that you were not allowed to sell any food to poor people. So what are they essentially doing here? It's such a strange story, right? They're giving money to the poor. Now imagine this poor person thought, "Oh, I hope somebody will give me charity." Imagine how incredible he feels when he just gets showered with charity and love, but what's the problem? He takes all this charity and goes into every store and shop after shop, they refuse to sell him any food until he would eventually die of starvation, the Midrash says. And then the people would come back and they had marked their coins ahead of time so that they could take back their own coins that they had given this poor person and then keep this sport going every time a new poor person would come to Sodom. That's a unique kind of evil, right? That's not like regular selfish, selfish we're used to. That's really dark.

And another more famous story about what would happen in Sodom, also has to do with guests. As guests would come to the city, they would offer them a bed... that seems so kind, right? Here take this bed. But if the bed was too big for them, they would stretch them out, just to fit perfectly into the bed. And if they were too small, if the bed was too small, they would cut off their extra parts to make them fit into the bed. So, these Midrashic stories are like...I'm trying to pull together, what is this kind of tradition coming to tell us? Why not just say they're really bad? Wouldn't it be enough if they were just really mean to guests, really mean to the poor? What are these kind of descriptive stories coming to tell us?

And I think he connects us to something that we often talk about here, which is, the difference between lies and a war on truth itself. There is evil and then there is a war on the very concept of goodness, itself. A corruption of the very value itself that you're not keeping. If they would have just been selfish and ungenerous, that's bad. But imagine the unique type of evil that it takes to present yourself as if you're giving charity, garner all the social status, the good feeling, the sort of prestige, the honor that comes from giving charity, only to actually find out that the charity wasn't only uncharitable, it was actually more cruel. It made that poor person get his

hopes up. He didn't go on to the next city. He thinks, "Oh, I'm going to be saved here. I have this charity," only then to find out that it was all a dark, dark joke.

And the same with the beds. They could have just said, "Sorry, no beds for you here," and then they would go on to the next city. They say, "No, no, no, here. We're going to offer you a bed." And then use that bed, use that kindness to have unspeakable cruelty and evil. There's something about it that feels to me like it's speaking uniquely to our times in a way that goes beyond just sort of like what I'm going to call regular evil. What we call regular evil. And it's like, I don't want to get too political and get too personal because I do believe that no matter what the outcomes of the elections would be, these things are entirely in HaShem's hands and Israel has to do what Israel has to do regardless of what the powers that be say.

But at the same time, it's hard to ignore the fact that some of these values are the very thing that were kind of at the top of the agenda just in these recent dramatic elections. Because when you think about, what are the issues that are really most sort of dividing people and speaking to people? What are people really...I don't think these elections were about a specific person, but they were about a certain value. Now what are the values that we've really been struggling with in the world and in Western culture and that really stood here at this test in America? I think we can point to a few things.

One is the difference between virtue signally and virtue itself. There are so many times that we see that it comes popular to show our compassion in ways that are really just about garnering social status. Are you using the right pronouns to describe a person? Are you having the right paper straw or having all, whatever rules and regulations about how much you can drive? Are you just sort of making these rules and then having this kind of presentation of kindness and compassion? Or are you actually putting upon yourself the responsibility to actually have compassion and kindness? Are people presenting themselves as one thing and then actually turning out...is it legitimate for example, to decide, "I'm going to present myself as something," and there's not really anything behind that. There's no factual basis.

It seems so striking and Sedom-like...that's not even a word. Sedom-like, that that was really the tipping point of the evil of Sedom and that seems to be the precipice that we, as Western culture we're on, this war between or do you actually accept upon yourself the requirement to be virtuous or is it enough to just speak about virtues. Give speeches about compassion and virtue without actually having anything to show for it. The story of the beds is also really telling, I think, in that very much in these elections we came to see the difference between speaking about being liberal and freedom and wanting equality versus the actual idea of free speech and allowing people to be different. Are you going to squish everybody into one bed, a one size fits all thing, you have to follow the science and the virtues that have been set as the standard of morality? Or is there space for people to actually express themselves without having to be ashamed?

So I just think that it was so interesting that this week's portion really highlighted the values that were being fought over right now. And I think that perhaps by the skin of our teeth there might be some hope to be escaping these Sedom values.

And one more thing was so insane to see, I don't know if Jeremy and Ari are going to talk about what happened in Amsterdam this week, but as I'm sure you guys know, Israelis that were visiting Amsterdam were attacked in the most insane...you couldn't call it anything but a Pogrom. And what's so crazy is that these people, just like on October 7th, these Muslim attackers in enlightened Europe, also had cameras and they were proudly filming themselves attacking Jews and trying to run over Jews and kicking and beating and punching. But then if you look at many of the headlines, looking at the headlines it's so infuriating because this is such an obvious truth. If it was just covered up or not spoken about, you'd say, "Ok, that's what we expect." But then you see headlines, especially in more Islamic-leaning media outlets, "Israeli soccer hooligans start riots." You say, "It's not just a lie, it's a war on truth, itself. It's not just evil, it's a war on the idea of goodness, itself."

And I think that this week's portion is calling on us to make that choice. Lot and his wife were called to leave that and say we recognize this war on truth. We recognize where this has gone off the rails, and we are walking away from it. We're not going to stay there. We're separating ourselves from communities that will do that. And to the point that even though you can't look back. To the point that Lot's wife looked back and she was not okay for that. She turned into a pillar, she was not able to escape that fate, that they were called to say, "We are separating ourselves, we're going to start our own community that has an objective standard of truth and morality and kindness. And we are going to recognize and follow out those Sedom values when they rear their head."

So I think it's kind of cool that this week's portion fits so interestingly with this week's events. So with that, I wish everybody a wonderful week and strength and courage in the face of the challenges that we face and that we should all be blessed.

Ari

Thank you, Tehila. Yeah, I really appreciated that because I think sometimes, we look at Sedom and Gemorrah and we make them very much like the other. They are the epitome of evil, nobody today could get anywhere near that. But definitely not us. And then it's important to be able to look inside and to say like, "Well, is there some sort of spark, some sort of element of Sedom and Gemorrah, the attributes that they had, lurking in the smallest level within me?" You know, even when we wash our hands, if you've ever eaten with us for Shabbat, and I really hope that each and every one of you are able to come to my personal home and spend Shabbat with me at my home and that would be a great joy. But before we wash our hands beforehand, the ritual hand washing, but afterwards we wash something called the "Water after we eat." And that's to wash off what the sages say is the salt of Sedom, the salt that they say blinds the

eyes. Why? Because when you really immerse yourself in a gastronomically, physiological sensory activity like eating, especially feasting, you can somehow get so lost in your own physical thing that you're blinded to the needs of others. And so we try to wash off what's called the waters of Sodom because we ourselves can have a little piece of that. And I think it's important what Tehila said, to really listen to that and understand that some of that is in us and within the world today. It's not abstract and historic. But anyways, I always feel like I grow from Tehila's teachings. And almost always, I grow from Jeremy's. And with that, please allow me to introduce Jeremy.

Jeremy

Alright, thank you very much. Very nice to see all of you. This was beyond not planned because last week, the plan didn't unfold. And this week it's kind of a replay. But it's amazing because Ari started off saying we are in the days of Mashiach. We are in the days of the final days. And I think he's right, I just don't think it's necessarily going to unfold with a massive war. I think the Jewish people are going to do tshuva. If our Fellowship does our work, we can inspire the world, ingather the exiles, and empower the Jewish people, and HaShem believes in us. How do I know that HaShem believes in us? Because Donald Trump was elected. Meaning HaShem wanted to create us into a people He created us to be. And no one likes to say it, but it's true. October 7th and this war has made Israel become the Jews HaShem created us to be. More united, stronger, more independent. And HaShem said, "Well, you couldn't do it on your own, alright, let's bring it on, let's make you guys tough, let's make you guys united, let's make you guys independent." And now it's like, "Hey, listen. I love you guys. I'm going to give you Trump, I'm going to give you Elon Musk. Can you just be the people that I chose you to be now? Can you do that?"

And then, Tehila says, that our friend Charlene, is a Fellowship member. Sometimes Fellowship members visit us on the Farm. We had Esther and her friends from Germany. Sometimes we visit Charlene in America. That's what's so beautiful about this Fellowship. It's not just an online class. There are real relationships. And Charlene inspired Tehila so much so that that's what she was talking about all week. She's now sharing it on the Fellowship. And the idea was to pray for HaShem to help us make ourselves better.

And I feel like that actually is the connection between Ari's Messianic complex that's happening right now and Tehila's teaching about your best must be better. And that actually is what the clip that I made, that I wasn't able to show it last week, so I'm going to show it this week is all about. And I say it's about Messianic faith. And I know that that make you like, "Whoah, Messianic faith? Jeremy? That's not a Jewish term, that's what the Messianics say. That's what Jews for Jesus say. You can't say Messianic faith." I'm like, "I don't really like that people tell me what to say and not to say just because someone else says that I can't say it anymore? I want to teach about Jewish Messianic faith because that's what I think the world needs right now, is Hebrew Jewish Messianic faith." And so, here is a video that I made. Check it out.

(video)

Jeremy

When we talk about faith, there's clearly a breakdown in communication. There's a reason why Mashiach, Messiah, and Masiach, communicate, are the same word in Hebrew. Because ultimately, to bring world peace, we need a great communicator. And in order to really understand faith, we have to understand the Hebrew language. And that's why there's a prophecy in the book of Zephaniah that the whole world will soon learn a pure language that we can finally speak the same language, a pure tongue.



And so the word faith in Hebrew is emunah. And that comes from the same root as the word imun, which means practice, and ne'eman, which means loyalty. And so what does the word, emunah, faith, actually mean in Hebrew? It means faith, practiced, with loyalty. Faith, practiced, in life, with loyalty. Faith in action is Hebrew faith.

So what does that mean for us? That means that not only acting out our faith will build us into the people that God created us to be. In all of the challenges and all of the doubts, we stay true and loyal to our faith. That's why the Torah speaks about brit, about a covenant. Because you need to be good because your good, no matter what, that's in fact the entire secret of the book of Job, of Iyov. This righteous man who has so many horrible things happen to him. And at the very end, he never wavers. He was a true Tzadik, a true righteous man in the face of disaster and tragedy. And satan, himself, coming after Job, Job never leaves the path of righteousness because that's true righteousness.

If everyone is always blessed every time they follow God, then what's their righteousness really worth? They're just being righteous in order to receive the blessing. True faith, biblical faith is faith practiced in loyalty, a covenant, no matter what.

In some ways, the biblical ethos is the foundation of real Western civilization. What do I mean by that? What are the most popular movies today in the world? They're all the super-hero, Marvel, comic book characters. And when you delve into the story of both the super hero and the super villain, they all tell the same story. Some tragedy or pain happened to them earlier on in life, and the villain says, "The world hurt me, I'm going to hurt the world back." And he takes it to evil.

The hero though, whether it be Bruce Wayne, whose parents were killed and he was just a child, or superman's planet that was destroyed. They lived through some sort of trauma, and

they took the pain of that trauma and they said, “I want to put an end to other people’s pain and suffering.” That’s real faith. That’s what emunah is all about. And in that way, Avraham avinu, Abraham, was the world’s first super-hero. That in the face of all of the challenges and unmet promises, he continued to be faithful. In some ways, to have emunah is to be faithful. To have trust, and to live out that trust, that’s why:



As they’re walking through the Red Sea, it’s not that they believed in God, like they believed in aliens, or they believed in this theology or that theology. They believed in God and in Moses. Well, Moses was right there before them. What does that mean? It means that they had faith and

trust and action and loyalty. And they followed Moses and God into the desert. That’s real faith and that’s the faith that all of us need now. And the world is going to push us to a place where that faith is exactly what’s demanded.

And with that, I want to bless everyone that we live with true emunah, that we live with true faith and we actually become the super-heroes that we were created to be. Shalom. (end of video)

Alright, that came out really good. I’m really happy that I finally got to share that video with you. I mean, we brought a film guy and had lights. We did it so professional because that’s what we said we would do and now we’re doing it. And so, I’m just really, really happy to share that video with you all. And I don’t want to take up Ari’s time, but I do bless all of us with real emunah, not with theology and not with religion. Just living with the Presence of HaShem in our life and living in that covenant. Alright my friends, have a wonderful week.

Ari

Ok, thank you, Jeremy. I can’t believe you actually said, “How do I actually know that HaShem believes in us? Because Donald Trump was elected.” How many people...you know Jeremy and I love each other, he’s my rebbe, I’m just saying this with love, but how many people were shocked to hear him say that? Because Donald Trump was elected? That’s how we know that HaShem believes in us? I mean...

Jeremy

Can I explain to you why, Ari? I want to explain that, you didn’t understand that?

Ari

I want you to explain.

Jeremy

Well, I'll tell you. Our faith was being tested, we were being molded into who we needed to be by October 7th, and with the Biden administration and the Harris administration. It forced us to be independent because we weren't able to be independent by ourselves. We wanted Trump to do the Trump Peace Plan, and we built all of our rockets and our missiles in America. And it was like, "Uh oh. You want to see that America is not your friend anymore. Can you finally be an independent nation that has a little bit of self-dignity?"

And Israel was like, "Well, now we have to have self-dignity and independence because Harris is not going to give us any more bullets." Then we had to become that. And then HaShem said, "Ok, now I will love you, I'm going to give you a pro-Israel president. I'm going to give you someone who is going to be nice to you. Are you going to fall back into the same mistake and believe that you're the 51st state of the United States. Are you going to not leave your parent's house? Can you finally be a man and grow up and be King David instead of being a little boy that's in his father's house?" So HaShem believes in us, that we can be King David. We don't need to be forced into becoming independent. He believes in us that we can be independent.

Ari

I certainly hope that's true, I really do. But I think it's also just as important to remember that this may just be a different sort of test. You know? Like Esau's fist is sometimes more dangerous than his sword.

Jeremy

Ari, I totally agree with that. HaShem loves us but the test is very kind. We don't have to be independent, we have to choose it. We have to be strong. That's why when Donald Trump got elected I put out such a funny video on my WhatsApp status, and I was out with my flock of sheep and I'm like, "Donald Trump got elected Jews, Jews of America, it's time to get the flock out of here. I'm getting my flock out of here." And people wrote me, "What Jeremy, you're not happy that Donald Trump was elected?" And I said, "It doesn't matter, you need to get the flock out of America either way. Now you just have a new test because you're going to be so comfortable in America, everyone's so pro-Israel, now you have a much bigger test. So you now need to get out of America.

Ari

Right. Ok, good, ok, so I think that's what I want to talk about during this Fellowship, it's about exactly those tests. Because I find that these portions are really so valuable to us, to me because these are the portions that we encounter Avraham Avinu. You know, Abraham our forefather. And I know...out of all the characters in the Torah, the prophets, the writings, the whole Tanakh, out of everyone...Abraham is the person whose life I use most as a roadmap for my own. Abraham is the one from whose story I draw the most inspiration and guidance and

faith. Who else is like that in this Fellowship? Like Abraham is your person? Ok, there's a lot of hands going up, a lot of hands. That's really interesting.

Ok, so yeah, for me, I used to think it was because my name is Ari Yehuda Abramowitz, which means "Lion of Judah, son of Abraham," meaning that my last name, the part of my name that most transcends my individual identity and spans generations, that's what a last name is, it connects you to all who were before you – it means Son of Abraham. And so, perhaps, you know, that's part of the reason. But I've come to believe that all of us here in this Fellowship for sure, if we really live the Torah, which I know all of you do, we need to be followers of Abraham.

Because keep in mind, Abraham wasn't really called a Jew, right? That idea had yet to be born. He was a Hebrew, which as you know comes from the word, "ivri," which means the other side. And if you were truly a descendent of Abraham, then you are willing to stand alone. If you are called to stand against the whole world, you stand against the whole world. Inevitably, at one point or another in your life, you will be called to stand alone. Whether it's totally alone, or you and your family, you will feel alone. And that would be a calling upon you.

But beyond that, you know we've spoken in the past about Abraham, he was the originally trail blazer who blazed that first trail to the God of Israel that we are all on today. That we are on on this very moment. The Lubavitcher Rebbe brings down this metaphor from the sages of Israel about what makes Abraham so special. And I've read it in the past, but it's so moving to me. I think about it all the time because you know after all, Abraham was willing to sacrifice himself and his understanding and his son and his everything for HaShem, that's true. But are you looking at the news coming out of Israel every single day? Everyday we see men, families, husbands, fathers with young children, knowingly march to the front lines in battle, in Gaza and Lebanon, knowing that there is a reasonable chance that they may never return home. That they may never see their wives again and their children again. Men who, like Abraham, are willing to sacrifice their very lives for HaShem. And the nation is full of parents who send their children to the front lines, knowing that they're placing their children on the altar to protect the nation of Israel and the Land of Israel for the God of Israel, just like Abraham place Isaac on the altar. I can't tell you how many times I've thought about that throughout this war.

So what was it about Abraham that made him so special? A lot of things. But the sages teach us that there was...this was the metaphor that was given. That there was an unexplored wilderness that had yet to be travelled to. There were no trails through this wild and seemingly untraversable wilderness. There were no maps, no markings, it had never encountered the sole of a foot. But then one man came and accomplished that, which not only seemed to be completely impossible, but no one even dared to try. He forged a path through this impossible, unexplored terrain.

And so this metaphor goes on to explain that others, future people were able to take the same difficult, dangerous, and extraordinarily painful path that this first pioneer forged. But no matter how brutal it seemed, they did have his map to follow. Many of them traversed the path through even more difficult circumstances. That's what I keep thinking about. We don't have HaShem speaking to us, where we fall to the ground in convulsions and prophecy. We don't have that, I don't have that. And you know, he did it in daylight and they did it in the stormy weather and in darkness. Nonetheless, they all recognized that their success in travelling this path was due to his blazing the first trail. And therefore, their tremendous sacrifices were in some way an extension of his own.

And so we learn from this that Abraham was the first pioneer of self-sacrifice, true self-sacrifice in which he was fully willing not only his beloved son, not only his future and his legacy, but also his mission in the world. You know, the very truth of his message. But we'll get into that soon. And so there's some disagreement about what exactly the ten tests were. Because you know there's the idea that he had ten tests. But the main ones are beyond reproach. But here's what Rav Biederman says, quoting Rashi. He says, "First, Nimrod tried to kill Avraham and he hid underground for thirteen years." I don't know if you know these stories from the Midrash. But of course you know, the Midrash is sort of the back stories, like the internal family stories that the nation of Israel has brought down from generation to generation, and so we're sharing that.

Number two – Nimrod threw Avraham into the furnace of Ohr Chasdim. You guys know that one? Avraham was sentenced to exile from his birthplace. Then God sent a famine upon his arrival. Sarah was taken to Pharaoh's home. Number six, the King sent Lot, his nephew into exile. Seven, Avraham saw in this prophetic vision by the covenant of the parts that his descendants will be ruled and afflicted in the exile from the four kingdoms. Number eight, he was commanded to circumcise himself and his son. Number nine, HaShem told him to banish Yishmael, his son, and Yishmael's mother. And ten, HaShem commanded him to slaughter Yitzchak, his son. These are the ten tests, and he didn't have questions on HaShem due to his immense love of HaShem.

And those final words, Rav Biederman teaches, that's the essence of the tests. We're going to review this again. Each of the tests had the potential to arouse questions in Avraham's mind. Just like each of our tests could arouse questions in our minds, to question HaShem's love for us and HaShem's kindness. Sometimes our tests are so brutal or so painful at the time, it can be heart-breaking. That's like a real test, are we able to really believe in HaShem's love and kindness, even in the midst of the heart-rending pain and grief? And I don't know if I could always do that, but I'll tell you the houses of shiva that I've gone to, the mourning houses, seeing the strength and faith, the rock of trust in HaShem, in the nation of Israel, I can't help but say, "How fortunate is our lot that I can be part of a nation like this."

But like that, Avraham loved HaShem, he trusted HaShem, and he passed all of his tests with that love and that trust. And in that way, we are an extension of him. But the question I found myself considering was why there needed to be ten tests? Couldn't there have been one big test? And I think the answer I'm arriving at, based on looking at Abraham's life, is that while each test did stand alone, each test did demand the strength and lessons and growth achieved from the test before it in order to pass it successfully. Meaning they built upon each other. Each test brought to life a strength and a faith deep in Abraham's heart, that until then, it had just been dormant. And by bringing that specific facet of his faith to life, Abraham now had the tools he needed to pass the next test.

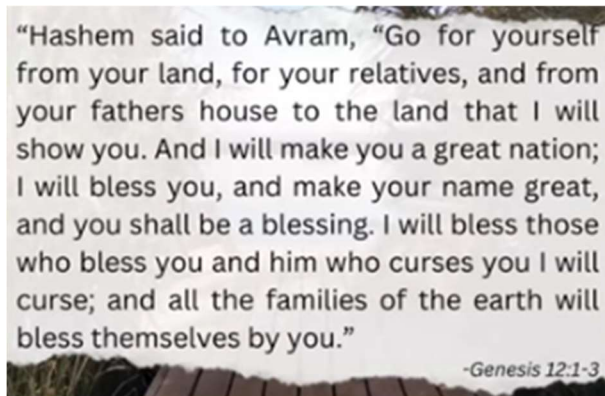
And once I realized this about Abraham's journey, I couldn't help but to look back on my own journey and see the precision of tests that I faced which have endowed me with the attributes and trust that I needed right when I needed them. I mean I'm not going to get into all of the details, but just coming to this Farm, I had just come off one of the hardest stretches of my life. Such pain and such challenge, but as I encountered and engaged this Farm, I immediately started to see how those qualities and those attributes that I got through that furnace of fire that I went through, I wouldn't have been able to...we wouldn't have gotten here, I wouldn't have gotten here on this Farm without them.

Anyways, so let's take a cursory look at Abraham's, right? At first the tests were about his willingness to sacrifice his life for HaShem, right? Like, Nimrod, there's the famous story of the powerful Mesopotamian King, Nimrod, who heard about the message that Avraham was sharing with the whole world, with all of these people in Mesopotamia, about the one true God. And that is of course undermining the foundational principle of his kingship, which was like many kings throughout history that he, Nimrod, was god. And so Avraham refused to retract his belief and declare that Nimrod was God and believe in his idolatry and whatever. And so he was thrown into a fiery furnace, which of course, did not harm him at all.

Now it's interesting, you'd think that sacrificing one's life would be the final test. But for many of us, for someone like Abraham's caliber, it was actually the first. It was so early on, I think that sacrificing our actual lives may be an easier and clearer test than some of the tests that I read in Ardelle's packet that we're facing right now. Right? I mean, that's clear. I think that by this point, many of you would agree. Who would agree? That sacrificing your life may be easier than some of the tests that you feel like you're facing right now? Ok, there's some hands up, not as many as I thought. Not as many as I thought, but I think that very often. Like, it's just so clear. At least sacrificing my life on the front lines, jumping on a grenade, saving my unit in Gaza, and saying, "Shema Yisrael, hear o Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." That's like so clear, but it's more nuanced, the stuff that I'm sort of facing right now.

But Jeremy was actually making fun of me the other day. He's like "Ari, the people in the Fellowship, you should pay each and every one of them for being your therapist. You got to

stop unloading all of your problems on them.” So I’m not going to go into that. But what I will say is that later on in this week’s portion, Abraham is called upon, lech lecha, that’s how the portion begins, to leave his land. Let’s look inside, chapter 12, verse 1:



So it’s interesting because the word in here betrays what these tests are really all about. All the tests that we go through, that Avraham...lech lecha...go onto yourself. Go, HaShem tells Avraham onto an adventure of self-discovery. These two words reveal the truth of what Avraham’s tests are all about. That’s what a test is, a test of self-discovery.

I just think about the whole shofar incident that I shared with you guys. And how I was so grateful and impressed and shocked of my response to it, that it didn’t like cripple me and humiliate me. But, “Ok, that just happened.” That was a self-discovery. These tests that we go through, are really about self-discovery and it’s interesting.

In this portion, Abraham is asked to leave three different things, right? In that verse, but in seemingly opposite order from which you would naturally, chronologically approach it, right? Wouldn’t it make sense that you would first leave from your father’s house, then from your relatives, then from your land? That would be the intuitive way to phrase it. But the Torah is not listing it chronologically. It’s listing it from easiest to hardest. The Torah is saying to Abraham, to all of us, first you have to leave your national culture and values and perspective, the bigger picture, which is not an easy ask. It’s not a small thing.

As I always say during my Farm tour when people ask why we didn’t put up fences and security systems, I say, “It’s one thing to take the Jew out of the ghetto, but it’s another thing to take the ghetto out of the Jew.” And when I have these yeshivas and seminaries come out here to the Farm all the time, I become more acutely aware of it. Because they’re right out of America, they’re raised there and they’re right here in Israel for a few weeks and I’m able to see how thoroughly Western thinking and consciousness has permeated them to such a degree that they don’t even realize it. I’m sure with me, too. Even now, with me, too. But I’m just able to see more clearly with them.

So anyways, so it isn’t easy to purge yourself from the values and culture from the land from which you were raised, it’s not easy. But it’s easier than purging yourself of that which is imprinted much more deeply on your heart – the values of your people, of your clan, of your neighborhood, of your community. And however difficult that is, it’s easier than leaving behind values of the home in which you were raised. The values that were taught each night as your

parents put you to bed. And each morning over breakfast. You know I'm telling this to you guys, but I'm thinking of all you right now when I'm saying this. Because if there's any group in the world that I know that have had to have the courage to do that, that have the real burning thirst to connect to God, it's you. And I know that so many of you have been willing to leave it all behind. You're really such an Abrahamic group of people.

So by the way, let me just say it right now, I want to try to wind this down a little bit earlier than later, because I want to hear from you. If you have questions, if you have thoughts, put up that little emoji with your hand so that I can see that and I can know that I should try to wind things down earlier because I am really am feeling like I love seeing your faces, but I want to hear from you. I want to hear your thoughts, I want to hear your questions. I want to hear anything. I don't know with all of you, if I'll have the answers to your questions, but I love hearing them anyways. I even like them more when I don't have the answers because it gives me something new to delve into and to discover and learn on my own.

Anyways, back to the whole thing. So the verse there is not in chronological order. It's in order of what is the least difficult to the most difficult. Then Abraham arrives in Canaan, the Land where he's promised abundance in every way. And he's greeted by famine, which could not have been easy. Right? The first command directly conveyed to Avraham by HaShem, and the opposite of that is fulfilled. It's not fulfilled to the degree... that he needs to leave to Egypt. Just think about this. He arrives a great nation, then he has to leave to Egypt with his tail between his legs to find a way to acquire basic provisions to survive. Forget wealth, forget becoming a nation. He's greeted by famine, and he has to figure out just how to make it, how to make ends meet. I imagine that that would cause me to doubt. Am I hearing voices in my head? Am I just a crazy person that I'm doing this whole thing and it's totally not manifesting itself?

But then again, knowing me, actually probably not, because here I am, really still believing. After all that we've been through in the Fellowship, after all these years from Corona on, I really still believe with my whole heart that we're on the cusp of Mashiach. So I guess maybe that's really the Abrahamic unswerving faith of Abraham...but anyways, then there were the commands of circumcision which presented an entirely new set of challenges to Abraham's faith. For not only is he asked to perform this never before surgery on himself, on the most sensitive organ on the body, at a time when he was promised that he would have children...and who knows what implications self-circumcision would have on that, but even more so, Abraham...the damage that this is doing to his mission, I think was the hardest. Because remember for Abraham, his mission was far more important than his own life. And not only could the commandment of circumcision very likely turn off the rest of the population of the world from even approaching Avraham, in fear that they would be asked to do the same thing. Well, that's what you gotta do to join his mission...I'm going to find another guy to follow, right?

But it would undermine the very universality of his mission. By creating this new sort of tiered, hierarchy of distinctions, and differentiations. I mean, think about it. Avraham used to have a very simple message that lit him up, that he was declaring the truth of the one God to all of humanity. And now, well now there would be tribes and nation and distinctions. There were just so many deep questions and challenges and threats that this commandment presented to Abraham. And it just seemed to threaten and undermine everything.

And then he was asked to banish Hagar and his son, Yishmael to what appeared to be certain death. I've always thought about this because I feel like I have that sort of love/peace that Abraham does, and the Abrahamic hospitality. And now he wasn't only...this wasn't just a demand to discard his message and his ideology, but to overcome his most fundamental God-given, hard-wired quality. The essential part of his character and his personality which is what? Chesed. Loving kindness. Right? We know that each one of our forefathers embodied one of the primary qualities – chesed, gvurah, tifferet. And we know that the quality of Abraham totally embodied was chesed, loving kindness. And here he was being commanded to overcome that very quality. And listen, it's always hard to go against your nature. Ethics of our Fathers teaches "He who can overcome his inclination, that is a hero." A hero is someone who can overcome his nature and his inclination.

But Avraham was being asked to overcome his nature in the most dramatic way possible. He wasn't be asked to put a sick puppy out of his misery. He was being asked to send Hagar and his son Yishmael into the blistering desert without the basic provisions they would need to survive. It sounds like something someone in Sedom would do. Not only is banishing Hagar and Yishmael to a certain death not loving kindness, it is the antithesis of chesed. To the untrained eye it would certainly seem like the highest level of cruelty and heartlessness.

And so we see each test takes Avraham out of his comfort zone, one step at a time. And let's remember that these tests, they are not like the tests that are given by flesh and blood, where the tests are seeking to learn something about the person being tested. No, these tests were not for HaShem to discover anything about Avraham. HaShem knows everything. HaShem formed Avraham in the womb. And he knows Avraham far better than Avraham knows himself. These tests were for Avraham, himself, for Abraham, himself to discover who he is. These tests were Abraham's journey of self-discovery. Each of these tests expanded the depth and the range of his faith and his trust in HaShem and brought him to higher levels of growth and righteousness, which is what all of our tests do if we just believe in the midst of it, while we're in it. We know that it's from HaShem, and that it can do that, then HaShem gives us the strength to emerge from it having grown even closer to Him.

That's why, I don't know how many of you know my whole story and my whole journey, but there's a lot of craziness, and a lot of sadness, and a lot of grief. And I think that most people that went through what I've been through would be somewhat jaded. But I still at the Shabbat

table, I bought this eyeball that sticks out of my eye socket and everyone thinks that my eyeball is falling out. And I just...I'm like a little kid. You can ask Shaena. And I think it's because of that foundational faith, that that just prevents me from being jaded. And you know, Jeremy and I recently had a pretty animated discussion about exactly this point. We're reflecting on my journey. You see I used to really consider myself a person of faith, a person of trust in HaShem. And you know all of the different missions we went on in the army. I don't remember ever feeling fear on one of them. Even when I moved out to the mountain alone without fences and security and everybody else was afraid...I thought they were...I felt zero fear.

And like I always say, that is not bravery. Bravery is when you feel fear and you overcome it. That was just me being not afraid, maybe just silly and simple, you know? But I was just not afraid. Money issues didn't rattle me either. If I had enough money to eat that day. I remember there was a time that I had 5,000 shekels to my name and then I found out that the parking tickets I was getting weren't being sent to me and they were doubling and doubling and doubling and I had to pay. And literally the parking tickets came out to the exact amount of the total amount of money I had in the world. And so, I paid them and I was like, "Alright, if I had money to eat that day, that sufficed for me."

Maybe there's some arrogance there, but I really considered myself an ish emunah, a man of faith, I really did. It was sort of like my thing. I mean, don't get me wrong, there were things that happened along the way that shook me here and there, but nothing too extreme, nothing too existential. I really tried to walk with HaShem and place my faith in Him and most of the time I think I was doing pretty ok.

And then, all of a sudden, in a relatively short amount of time, I got married to a woman that I love, and I had three children that I absolutely adore. If we had more time, I would just start showing you pictures for the rest of the Fellowship. And all of a sudden, things begin to really matter to me that never mattered to me at all. First and foremost, the war. As a single guy I would have never considered for a moment, leaving the Farm when the war broke out. And there was really very real intelligence that we were facing attack from the surrounding villages around us which significantly outnumbered us. I mean thousands to one is the degree to how outnumbered we were, and without any security or anything.

But that first most vulnerable Shabbat of my life after October 7th when all of this intelligence was coming in that they're going to attack, I'll admit it. I sent Shaena and the kids to her parent's house in Efrat. And I stayed back to hold down the fort. And my anxiety level when they left went down from like a 9.5 to somewhere around zero, maybe zero point one. And then when she returned that first Saturday night and declared that she's never leaving again, well those words inaugurated at least six months of periodic bouts of anxiety and fear. Not all the time, just it came in waves. Months of sleeping in my uniform with the walkie-talkie next to my head, constantly. Almost sleeping not at all because there's constant chitter-chatter going

on and I'm having to listen to absolutely everything. I even asked them if we could make our own frequency that they could turn to us when something real happened. But then they didn't want to do that because what? They're going to, just for us in a moment of actual attack, they need to...so that's what it was. Just patrolling my house in a perpetual state of some level of alertness and readiness.

And by the way, there's nothing inherently wrong with being alert and sleeping in my clothes and trying to maintain this readiness. Nothing's wrong with that. On the contrary, it's probably a praiseworthy and important thing to do. The part that bothered me was what was happening inside. That's what caused me to question myself. You know, those moments of fear and anxiety, that's what bothered me so deeply. And I really judged myself quite harshly about all of that. To some degree I still do. Did it mean that I was never really a man of faith? Did I perceive myself as someone who trusted HaShem, but really I didn't? And when times of real trials and tribulation came, then it would just be exposed as just I didn't believe at all? Perhaps I just had nothing on the line and I never really had the faith that I thought I did. And I struggled with these questions in a very real way.

And I think studying the life of Avraham really does encourage you. Studying the journey of Avraham, I really believe that I didn't lose faith, not at all. In some ways I think that I may actually have just graduated to the next test, to the next level. That this trust is what the sages call a descension in order for an ascension. It wasn't really descending. It just was...when I got married and had children, I felt like I went from seeing black and white to seeing in vivid color. You know, from two dimensions to three dimensions. Having a family took me so out of my element and shook me to the core and made me feel so vulnerable. All of these emotions that I never had before. And I think maybe when you're younger and you start younger in your early 20's, then you're younger and you're more pliable and you're able to adapt. But when you have your first at 40, it was just a lot. And then 42, we had our Shiloh, and then 44 we had Mordecai Shimshon, and then all of a sudden, we went from thinking we may never get married or have kids to having this beautiful, unbelievable family. It was a lot and what was on the line mattered infinitely, more to me than my very own life did.

And so, it's not that these new tests revealed that I had no faith before. On the contrary, I did have faith before. And it was only by tapping into those reserves of faith that I built up over all of those years that I was able to scrounge together the faith that I needed to make it through these new infinitely more challenging tests. Because in the end of the day we're still here, we're still on the mountain. We made it through. Like who says the passing of the tests means with an A+. Maybe an A+ is even with tears and fear and shaking and maybe that's still passing the test.

You know, all of this has happened...the circumstances have fundamentally changed. The parameters have foundationally shifted. And I was being called upon to expand the range and

the depth of my faith to these unexplored dimensions. And it's scary to do that. We've all done it, you've all done it. It's destabilizing and it hurts. And that pain is the price for growth. And that's why the great commentator, Rashi, on the first verse of the portion, where Abraham is commanded to get up and leave everything behind, he says, "For your benefit and for your own good." It's sort of a rare way that he phrases things. It says, "For your benefit and for your own good." And in the Promised Land, HaShem says, "You will be the father of a great nation." But here, in the land of your familiarity and your comfort zone, if you stay there...that Abraham, you will not even have any children at all. You won't merit to have any children at all.

When HaShem takes us out of our comfort zones to these deepest, unexplored territories, both in the outside world and in our own hearts, we're given the opportunity to apply our faith to entirely new facets of our essence and really thereby become new people. We become people whose entire destiny can be fundamentally altered by virtue of the fact that the test itself has transformed us into a new person, than we were before. Perhaps the pretest Avram and Sarei were destined to die childless and forlorn. But the posttest Avraham and Sarah, well they were destined to change absolutely everything that we know of the world and bring HaShem to the consciousness of all of mankind. Bring the world ultimately to its complete perfection. That is what these tests allowed them and propelled them to do.

You see it's just up to us whether we embrace the change, whether we trust the challenges, whether we boldly venture forth into an entirely new and unfamiliar reality or we fight the change. We doubt the divinity within the changes and we insist on staying well within our comfort zones. You know each test, it doesn't only confirm whether the previous test was truly internalized, but it also takes us up to the next level above and beyond where we could have ever imagined that we would ever be able to walk with HaShem.

Anyways, I want to shift gears, but I think I'm going to save, I want to bring together what happened in Amsterdam and Trump's selection and all of that together. But I feel like if I go into that, I won't be able to really connect with all of you as I want to. So, let me sort of wind the Fellowship down right now and then hear hopefully from all of you. And if any of you want to stay on afterwards, I would be happy to try to connect these tests that we've been through with what I think the tests that we're facing now with Trump. Because like Jeremy said, I wouldn't have said it like Jeremy said it. I still don't know if I fully agree with Jeremy, but people are asking. Is Trump going to be a good thing for Israel or a bad thing for Israel? I was asked to write an article for it for JNS. I've been really thinking about that. And I have sort of an answer that I want to share with you, that I want to go into.

But first, I want to just open it up, I just wanted to sort of give this sort of follow-up amendment. Tabitha, I hope it's ok because you know, the tests that we're going through, it's not a simple thing. Because people are asking me the Trump thing. Is it good for Israel or is it bad for Israel? Because on the one hand, in his last term, he arguably secured the title of the best president for

Israel in America's history. He moved the embassy to Jerusalem, he recognized Israel's sovereignty in the Golan Heights, he defunded UNRWA, the terrorist network, he got moving the Abraham Accords, this historic, unbelievable peace treaty that I, myself doubted that was ever possible in the pre-Messianic era. And he brought it forward between Israel and a lot of the Sunni Arab states that actually paused me to second-guess whether all of the...made me sort of make a distinction in my mind between some of these more regal, Saudi, Emirates that were more like Yishmael. They may be enemies at a time, but have a regal disposition versus the Palestinian Philistines that are just a death cult of Nazi jihadist murders. Like there's a distinction to make there. And I think it was the Abraham Accords that helped make that happen for me.

But on the other hand, towards the end of his first term, he was planning on pushing through a plan which is being called the Trump Peace Plan. Do you guys remember that? It was officially called Peace to Prosperity, a vision to improve the lives of Palestinian and Israeli people.



This is the map of the Palestinian state that he wanted to establish and it did involve carving up the Land of Israel, including parts of Judea and Samaria to create a Palestinian state. I don't know if you guys remember it, we spoke about it on the Fellowship then. But you know they actually created a peninsula-like appendage in order to include our Farm onto the part of southeastern Judea that would be in the State of Israel. Which on the one hand, I guess was considerate. They did that literally for us. It was like very flattering to know that Ambassador Friedman and Trump...well I don't know if Trump actually did. But they sat down and they worked up the maps and changed it because of our Farm. But on the other hand, we would have been surrounded on all sides, God-forbid, by a Palestinian terror state in the heart of

our ancient God-given homeland. Which by the way, caused me to consider whether it may have been a gift for Trump that he lost the last election. I really thought that. Because what that essentially did, was it left him having only done good for Israel. Because Israel was going to accept his proposal, it was pretty clear. Everything indicated that the political leadership on our side was ready to accept this, despite the fact that it meant establishing a terror state in the hills of Judea, God-forbid.

But there's just no denying the truth, that the Trump administration were true friends to Israel, or as true as it's ever gotten for us. Which is a very stark contrast to the very clear adversarialism and enmity of the Biden administration and Kamala Harris. From their arms embargo since the start of our war against Iran and their proxies in our time of need they were embargoing weapons. To their funding of our enemies and transferring funds and humanitarian aid right into the hands of Chamas, or building a port. A ridiculous port to circumvent Israel so they can give more and more, more directly to Chamas. I mean, who can testify more than me and Mike Isley who are actually suing the Biden administration in a very real lawsuit regarding the morally bankrupt and horribly unjust sanctions that they were unleashing on the Jews of Judea and Samaria, and their need to create some sort of sick, moral equivalence between Chamas and Jews. So that's why they did it, because they needed to create that.

And you know what? She lost Detroit, anyways. Despite all of it, there was all of that pandering, she lost it anyways. That was cute. But anyways, you know it seems like the answer is clear. Of course, Trump's victory would be good for Israel. But I found myself second-guessing it. Because when you look at the last 20 years of the U.S./Israel relationship, there's a clear pattern that emerges, that Israel tends to implement the most self-destructive policies when we have a "friend" in the White House that's pressuring us to. Whether it's giving away territory, or refraining to fight our wars to victory. I remember George W. Bush pushed the Gaza disengagement. I don't think that Obama would have been able to push that, but Bush was a friend, so he was successful at doing that.

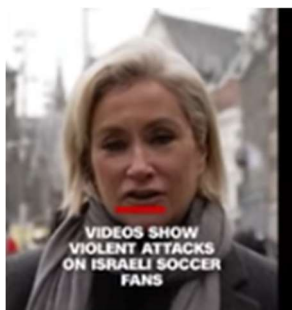
On the other hand, under U.S. leaders who are clear adversaries of Israel, Israel tends not to give away any territory to our enemies, and we tend to be more inclined to fight the battles that we need to fight for our own survival. So you know, after all, it was the day after his meeting with Kamala and the U.S., that Prime Minister Netanyahu assassinated Chamas leader in Tehran, ordered the beeper attack, killed Nasrallah, and all these other highlights that we remember so fondly. Right? So when we have clear adversaries in the White House, Israel tends to be much more bold and decisive in taking our fate into our own hands and putting our faith where it belongs. Whether we're doing it out of will or a lack of choice, we're putting our faith where it belongs, which is not in the White House or in the U.S. administration, but rather in HaShem and in the young lions of Judah that are defending us with their hearts and their souls in His Name.

But does that mean that we should actually vote for our own enemies so that we're forced to put our faith in HaShem and in the justice of our cause? That doesn't make a lot of sense. What do you guys think? Is there an argument to make? How many of you were relieved that Trump won? Raise your hands if you were relieved that Trump won. Ok, I'm not seeing Cal's...there's a few hands that I don't see up. I expected everybody. You know, how many of you think that Trump was good for Israel. Raise your hand if you think Trump was good for Israel.

Ok, so my post-Abraham answer to that question, whether Trump is good for Israel is that it's up to us. That's the answer. It's up to us. It's up to us to decide if he will be a blessing or a curse. If we as a nation have learned and internalized the lessons that we've been taught since October 7th, then I do believe that Trump will be a great blessing. If we understand that we can never allow ourselves to become dependent on America for weapons, for support, for approval, for anything else, then it could be a time of great blessing. But if we allow ourselves to fall into the co-dependent, habitual state of mind in which we believe that we need America for our own survival, well then, I think that the Trump presidency could theoretically be worse for Israel than the Harris administration may have been.

You know if Israel approaches the Trump administration with the sense of mutual respect and self-worth, looking them eye-to-eye, we've learned that over the past year. We killed more people in the past two months on America's terrorist's list than they've killed in the past 30 years. And the intelligence, forget that, if we recognize how absolutely critical we are to America's strategic position in the Middle East and in the world. If we don't lose sight of the fact that we can fight and win with no one's help but the Creator of Heaven and Earth. If we demonstrate that we are a nation of weathered-warriors that can take on the entire world if need be because HaShem is with us, well that will reveal that we have indeed passed the great tests of this last year and have become a new people and a new nation.

But if we allow ourselves to fall back into that comfort zone and back into that familiar role as this co-dependent vassal state that takes orders from our bigger, stronger friend in the West, well it could just be a disaster and a curse. So, again, you know, whether Trump will be a blessing or a curse, it's up to us. It's not up to them. If they're good to us, then we can respect each other. And if they're not, then we'll adapt and respond as we need to respond. Meaning it's not up to them. And so the State of Israel, we're facing a moment of truth which will reveal who we are and whether we've grown from the great tests HaShem is testing us with this past year. But it's not just here in Israel that we're being tested. Every Jew in the world is being tested as well. You know, as all of you know, as Tehila mentioned, there was this horrific Pogrom-like attack against the Israeli Jews who went to just root for Israel's soccer team in Amsterdam. I want to play CNN's coverage of the story:



An investigation is not underway here in Holland. The police have been given special stop and search powers. Protests have been banned until Sunday in the wake of the events of Thursday night. Horrifying attacks of a hit and run nature on individual Israeli football fans. The tension had been rising since Wednesday when the Maccabee Tel Aviv fans began arriving here in the Dutch capital. On social media there were videos of a Palestinian flag being taken down and anti-Arab chants. By Thursday night, extra police men and women had been put

on the streets of Amsterdam, but not enough in the end to prevent those attacks on Israelis that

led to the evacuation by Israeli planes on Friday, their return to Tel Aviv, where again the Maccabee Tel Aviv fans were filmed chanting anti-Arab slogans. Still, here in Amsterdam, the violence, the nature of the attacks on Thursday night, the targeting of Israeli football fans has been described by Dutch authorities as anti-Semitic in nature. An investigation now, trying to figure out exactly how it could have come to get so bad with Israel closely involved in gathering evidence and trying to seek prosecutions.

Ari

I mean, just...how many times did she mention that the Israelis took down a Palestinian flag? As if that...it's really the soft bigotry of low expectations to justify, to even mention at all, let alone twice that the Israelis had an anti-Arab chant. Ok, let's say that is true, which I don't think it was, but let's say that it was. They took down a Palestinian flag and that warrants a Pogrom? Just the absolute moral bankruptcy of these people is just absolutely beyond. But nonetheless, what happened in Amsterdam, I think, is so shocking for the Jews because it's just upping the game of what's really happening already all over the world.



Here's an attack that happened just yesterday in Manhattan. I was just sent that just minutes ago, so I haven't confirmed it yet, but I shared it anyways because it doesn't really matter. Because attacks like that are happening against Jews in New York and around America and around the world every single day. But it doesn't fit into the narrative that the main-stream fake media wants to share, so you just don't hear about it. But you can Google it, they've taken a lot of them down from

YouTube, but they just literally...they take the shtrreimels off the Ultra-Orthodox people's heads, run away with them, smash them in the face, constantly, constantly, constantly all the time. And it's getting only more all of the time, not only in New York, not only in America, all around the world. And the only differentiating factor with Amsterdam was the scope and the magnitude of it. But it's almost like...a lot of Jews feel like this is a little bit of a sneak peak, a preview, Amsterdam is a preview of what we're going to see happening all around the world.

Now there are many Jews, both in Israel and internationally that are beginning to sound the alarm. That are beginning to call for the exile to see the writing on the wall. To learn from history and come home. Here's a picture that's making rounds:



Comparing 1938 Amsterdam to 2024, how different is it really? Just a different cast of characters. Here's another even more controversial picture that's been making rounds as well:



Right? It's a stark contrast we have – a cattle car or an El Al plane. And that could seem like hyperbolic or over-dramatic or actually a sneak peak of what really we may be facing as a people.

You know, the nation of Israel, we've seen all of this before. We've seen what mankind is capable of inflicting on the Jewish people when their spirit is moved to do so. And each time, HaShem is moving their spirits and arousing within them or unleashing their hatred for us and letting it really just...let it roll. You know the prophet Jeremiah said in chapter 16:

But, as the Lord lives, who brought the people of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands where he had driven them; and I will bring them back to their land that I gave to their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishers, says the Lord, and they shall catch them; and afterwards will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.

-Jeremiah 16:15-16

You know, it's funny, it actually makes me think of this prophecy that the Arabs always read from the Koran that the Jews will hide behind the trees and the tree will come and say, "Hey, there's a Jew behind me, come kill him."

You know, the fact is, that you come to Israel and you can see tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of Jews that have left the various countries throughout the Sephardic exile and Yemen, Algeria, Morocco, the Far East, to the Ashkenazic Jews from European countries and America and are just coming back because the fish, the fish are just so delicious. The life in Israel is just so filled with mission and passion and joy and purpose. And so we're coming not because we're running away from everything, but we're running to.

But now, God is starting to shift the gears in a very serious way. I mean, it's been happening, but now it's starting to...the Amsterdam thing is a preview of what's to come. And the hunters are coming and we see those Jews running and it's such a desecration of God's Name, seeing Jews beaten to the ground in the streets of Amsterdam. But the fact is, that Jews around the world, there's an element of that in and of itself. I'm just being honest, it is also a desecration of God's Name. The exile itself where the nations will say, "How great can the God of Israel be that His people are scattered throughout the world?"

The ingathering is a sanctification of His Name and a necessary precursor and prerequisite to bring all the Jews back home to the Land of Israel. So through us as a nation, as a people, can He reveal Himself to all of mankind.

So the question is, now that the hunters are coming out, this time are we going to listen? All these Jews are like, "Oh, Nazi Germany, you know the writing was on the wall. How couldn't they leave?" The same people that I grew up with saying to me at our Shabbat table...how couldn't they leave, are still in Houston, Texas. Are still in New York, are still in the exile.

You know, the essential test that the nation of Israel is facing, both within Israel and without is the same. You know, after two million, after two thousand years of dispersion and exile and persecution, we have the opportunity to redeem ourselves within Israel, will we be able to open our eyes and to see the truth that HaShem is our rock? Finally, can we just see that? It's so clear and it's so obvious. He's our Redeemer, only in Him should we put our faith. The statistical possibility that after all these inter-continental ballistic missiles being shot from Iran and not one Jew was killed is like nil. HaShem is clearly spreading His wings of protection over us. How can we not see that with such clarity? But we're starting to, we're starting to.

And we just simply cannot fall back and continue to put our trust in other peoples and other nations in just flesh and blood. So anyways, we're being tested, we're being tested, all of us. And please know, I want you to know that the personal tests that you are all experiencing, that we're all experiencing are an integral part of the unfolding of redemption. They are, because our hearts are in the redemption. So everything that's happening to us, we're a part of it, whether we can understand it with our finite minds or not. Everything that is happening, everything is part of the tapestry of the coming of Mashiach. We're all being tested in exactly the way that we need to be tested right now for our own journey of growth and our own faith.

Avraham faced these ten tests and he passed them all. But our sages teach that he passed them not only because of the course of action that he took in contending with them. He passed them because he didn't ask questions regarding HaShem. Because on some level, each and every one of the challenges that he faced and that we face were tests of whether we really believe in HaShem's kindness and love. Even when things appeared otherwise and Avraham never doubted that. And it was that, that is the reason he passed them, not the course of action he took, but what was happening in his heart.

And so, my friends, in these times of great tests, I want to bless all of you and all of us with the simple faith to always remember and keep alive in your hearts that this test that you're facing is a gift for you from the Creator of Heaven and Earth, a gift designed with the most loving, precision, and consideration to give you the opportunity to harness it, to come close to HaShem in exactly the way that you need to grow. And so, I want to bless all of you, that even if you don't know necessarily know how to proceed with perfect clarity, you can pass the test anyways

on an even deeper level by never forgetting that HaShem loves us and He has compassion on us and when everything appears otherwise, keep our hearts trained on HaShem and remember that He loves us and we love Him and the test is passed.

And with that, allow me to bless you the blessing of Aaron the High Priest, and while I am not, of course, a descendent of Aaron, we are a nation of priests. And so, it is with that great joy I want to bless all of you.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

May God bless and protect you, may He shine His light and His countenance upon you, and may He give you peace. Amen.

I love you guys very much, thank you so much for being with me, staying with me, and we'll see each other, bizrat HaShem, next week. Reach out, stay in touch, shalom, shalom.