

Hold your hand to your heart.

Feel it beating. Remember with your beating heart that you are human

“In place no one is human ... strive to *be* humanE.”

Remember that a heart has many chambers – yet beats as one. That is a frame for what I want to share with you now.

Torah portion – God is about to destroy Sodom & Gomorrah ... (old story – for one choice is to seek to wipe away evil ... e.g. Flood, scattering of peoples after Babel).

But now comes key moment – God says, “Can I hide this from Avraham ... for all nations are to bless themselves by him?” Further, God says, “his children ... (must) do what is just and right” to fulfill promise given (that of land).

That is eternal challenge for us ... from our origins connected to land (we are not occupiers, colonizers), but by dint of faith, history & international law have place in Land ... but there is an AND ... to remain there we must be exemplars of justice

Model – Avraham – challenges God, do NOT wipe away righteous/innocent with wicked; stays God’s hand if enough of them. Thus, Avraham exemplar that for us as Jews we must not ever fall into trap of either-or. That is what Hamas wanted ... to sow hate, to seed revenge in our hearts. We must resist, בכל לבבך “with all our hearts (our animalistic *yetzer hara* – seeking payback tempered by our *yetzer tov* – inclination to good” ... and בכל מאדך all our might (to speak of peace, but also truth and justice)”.

We must realize that the option for us is not either OR (או), but both AND (ו). Words so close in Hebrew ... just one letter difference ... but the OR includes the ׳א, which is a letter with no sound; the *aleph* is an emptiness, an absence of seeking anything in the other, an inability to listen, an incapacity to accept anything or anyone else. But ׳ו the letter that means “and” connects, it contains all possibilities ...

And so this final thought ... as God teaches Avraham, we must not be a people of either/or but both/and ...

- Israel needs to destroy Hamas, its murderous ideology that threatens genocide and terrorizes its own citizens AND to acknowledge how tragic that Palestinians are suffering because not allowed to leave, that military headquarters and rocket launchers are placed under hospitals
- Hamas has misappropriated funds meant for Palestinian people AND Gazans deserve food, water, healthcare
- We can disagree about Israel’s responsibility in helping create the animus felt by so many Palestinians AND be united in condemning the barbarism of Hamas and its supporters around world whose silence about what they did (or worse support for them) reveals that the immorality of so many (especially in progressive world and academia)

- We can hope and support for end to those who seek our extermination AND work for dignity for the millions of Jews and millions of Palestinians who share that land, crating seeds of hope, and peace

We are “prisoners of hope” ... as audacious and crazy as that may seem.

Thus – as an expression of that hope I Ask all our Jewish clergy to now join as one as we join in Israel’s national anthem ... we have (and never will lose hope) – עוד לא עבדה תקותנו