TRUMP
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Video of this sermon is available here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkNIZeVudCM

I have to admit to you that I am not sure what to say tonight. I have a eulogy for Leonard Cohen that I will share before Kaddish but right now I am mourning more than a man.

I am grieving for my country and I am vacillating between Anger and Depression. Denial was a brief period when I woke up Wednesday morning and thought it had all been a bad dream. Bargaining was also a blip, what do you trade when you feel like you lost your country.

I guess I need to start there. Part of why I do not know what to say tonight is that while this affects all of us, it's different for you as Canadians. I consider myself so fortunate to be in this country, but it's not mine yet.

My friends are all asking to move here and sleep on my sofa. My parents actually wrote me with 1930s Germany tropes of, "you may have saved your family by going to Canada when you did". I like to think they are being overly dramatic, but at the same time – there is no place I would rather be with my family right now than in this country.

And that is maybe the part that is at the core the anger and depression. I feel like I lost my country Tuesday night. Not that my candidate lost, or my party – I have voted for winners and losers all my life – but as has been said so much better by so many this was a referendum on decency and compassion; the values I thought were at the core of the character of the United States. They were trumped by hatred Tuesday night.

Now many have observed that not everyone who voted for Trump was racist, bigoted, misogynistic, xenophobic. Some simply could not vote for her, so they just stayed home or left that selection blank. But others, still knowing full well his (not there's) but his deplorable behavior looked past it because they had been neglected in the far too timid economic recovery, their medical bills were too high, they had lost jobs and homes and confidence in their government to protect them so they overlooked all that he said and did and voted for a populist who promised to make them great again. They cared only about the ends and not the means.

And this is the part that has truly put me in despair. I pray that it was just campaign rhetoric and that he won't be able to do the many horrible things that so many cheered him on to do. But he was still rewarded for saying them. He won and decency lost.

I am struggling with how to explain this to my children. They go low, we go high. I can teach that to my kids, I can aspire to that in myself. But meanness, misogyny, racism, bigotry, verbal and physical pugilism, that's how you get to be President of the United States and leader of the free world. I cannot square that. Not with my faith in humanity, not with my faith in Judaism.

Throughout the Torah God tests the Jewish people. He puts them in the most vexing of situations. Temple are destroyed, false prophets rise amongst them, they are attacked from within and they are attacked from without. In each instance the people rise above the challenges and are stronger because of them, usually stronger together.

By now you know my theology, I don't think God brought us Donald Trump – but I do think this is a test of our character and our humanity.

The biblical prophets were always ignored and often derided and yet they stood up, and spoke truth to power. In the end, sometimes decades later they were always proven right. The cancerous cells they saw in society metastasized just as they said they would, the people suffered greatly but they recovered and eventually healed and were restored.

R'faeynu Adonai – Dear God please heal us.

The last stage of grieving is acceptance – when I move to that stage it will not be to accept that this is how America or the world works now, that hatred and hate are rewarded. Rather I will accept this as a test. Perhaps the greatest test of my generation, one that began on 9/11. A test of our humanity, a test to prove that love does trump hate, that we can be good AND prosperous. That Americans can build a great nation without tearing each other down in the process.

I am so glad I am in Canada right now, but there is work to be done here too, work to be done in America and around the globe. It has been the central calling of my rabbinate – you've heard my sermons, attended my classes and read my articles – this is my Torah to love your neighbor as yourself – to have empathy and seek understanding. To grow every day and aspire to be deserving of being created b'tzelem Elohim – created in God's image.

Tuesday night made clear what we already knew – there is still much work to do, we are not there yet, maybe we have slipped backward.

This shabbas I will rest and pray, come Monday – we must get back to work.