

On the ground in Israel: An Israeli's perspective on the war

TRANSCRIPT

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[00:00:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Welcome back to The Denison Forum Podcast. I'm Dr. Mark Turman, executive director of Denison Forum. We're sitting down today for a very, very special conversation about where things are in the conflict between and Hamas. And we have some very special guests joining us in addition to Dr. Jim Denison, our co founder and chief cultural apologist we also have our friend, Mike Fanning.

Mike is the founder and president of MBF Enterprises, which is essentially a Bible study tour ministry that Mike has been running for more than 40 years. Mike is also a graduate of Baylor University, holds a PhD from Baylor in Hebrew Bible, ancient Near East archaeology, modern Middle East archaeology, anthropology, Hebrew and Greek, which is a mouthful. And I gotta tell you, you'd never know it if you met Mike that he holds that much education, alright?

We are also joined today by a very, very special friend of Denison Forum, also of Dr. Denison and Dr. Fanning. We have Ruben Nevo with us. Ruben is an Israeli citizen living in, talking to us from Israel today, and he is a very, very dear friend of ours and of our ministry.

So gentlemen, let me just say good morning, happy new year, and welcome to the podcast. How are you?

[00:01:27] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Thank you, Mike. Thank you, Mark,

[00:01:29] **Mike Fanning:** Thank you. Appreciate it.

[00:01:30] **Dr. Jim Denison:** just tell you how grateful I am, Mark, that Mike and Ruben would do this, that they would take some time and do this with us. I've known Mike some seminary days back when dinosaurs were still roaming the earth and the planet hadn't cooled

[00:01:40] **Mike Fanning:** That's true. That's

[00:01:41] **Dr. Jim Denison:** know, we, I've done probably 35 tours to Israel with him myself. Mike, how many hundreds have you done? I don't, you probably don't even know how many you've done

[00:01:50] **Mike Fanning:** lost count. I tried to find my passports to use, you know, look at the stamps. You know, 100, 150, I don't

[00:01:57] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah,

[00:01:58] **Mike Fanning:** A lot,

[00:01:58] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Israel for two years. Yeah, a lot. And then across the years, just to be able to work with Reuben, one of my dearest friends in the world.

So, Mark, I'm just so honored to get to do this. I really am, especially with Reuben, a little bit with Mike, but especially with Reuben, you know, I love you to

[00:02:13] **Mike Fanning:** Well, let me Let me tell you, when I started doing these trips, you know, I, I looked for tour guides, and needless to say, we had to cycle through some that, that weren't so good. And when I was a very young person, I met this very old man named Ruben, and yeah, that's true. And Ruben and I just hit it off, and I, I don't know, Ruben, I think we've worked together for 25 years, something like that.

I mean, it, it, Could it be longer? I, I, I don't know, but

[00:02:40] **Reuben:** I was I was seven years old when when we

[00:02:42] **Dr. Jim Denison:** That's right.

[00:02:43] **Mike Fanning:** That's, yeah, that's, that's true,

[00:02:45] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Meeting Mike was the worst day of your life.

[00:02:47] **Mike Fanning:** absolutely. Well, Reuben was born in 1961, way down in the south part of Israel in the Negev Desert on a kibbutz. And I think that's where Reuben got his love for the desert.

Every time I try to call Reuben or send him a WhatsApp or iMessage and he doesn't answer, I know he's out in the desert. With his jeep or down at the Dead Sea, soaking in, in, you know, one of the hot springs or what have you. Israel lo Reuben loves Israel, loves the outdoors, loves the desert. He's a government tour guide.

He, my gosh, I could go through all the things he's done being the representative of the Jewish agency for the government of Israel and Chile. He's led trips throughout Israel and Europe and Spain. He's also in the Israeli Defense Forces an Army officer in the Combat Unit.

He's got a Master's. So, I'm gonna stop saying really nice things about Reuben, but say the greatest thing about Reuben is his wife, Sandy. She is awesome. And and, and Lila, their dog, and Reuben's got, I mean, I could go on and on and on.

[00:03:52] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, let me

add this. So let me just add this. Okay, so, Reuben is this guy, I mean, he's hiked, I don't know how many bases on Mount Everest, literally. I mean, he loves to hike mountains, he does all this stuff. So we took him to a baseball game. He came to the States, and we took him. He said it was boring.

[00:04:07] **Reuben:** It was boring.

[00:04:11] **Dr. Jim Denison:** You know? And then he watched these people getting ballpark nachos. I mean, Reuben's, like, incredibly healthy. He's this great athlete. Saw people eating these nachos, and he was horrified. He was absolutely horrified, so. I don't know. I don't know what you think about that, but there's, you know, there's something you need to know about Ruben is that he hates nachos and thinks baseball's boring.

[00:04:29] **Mike Fanning:** well, and these trips to Everest and, you know, to the base camp, I mean, I think the altitude's done something to his brain. I mean, but,

[00:04:37] **Dr. Jim Denison:** between that and soaking in the dead sea,

[00:04:39] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Feel free to jump in here anytime, Ruben and you

know, stop sporadage.

[00:04:44] **Reuben:** I think I can leave now.

[00:04:48] **Mike Fanning:** here's, the last thing I'll say, and then we can get to the more serious things. Whenever there's something going on in Israel, and you know, I try to keep abreast of things. I read the Israeli papers every day. I, I listen, I try to soak everything in and understand the perspectives of the people that are saying these things, which is really, really important when you listen to or read anything about Israel.

When I really want to know what's going on, I'll pick up the phone and I call Reuben. And so, we are really lucky to have Reuben here to talk about a really, I mean, horrible situation that's going on over there right now. It, I, I, I can't remember a time that it's been so, fraught with fear and anxiety and just horrible things.

And I'm I'm ready for this to be over. I know you are, Reuben, but I'm, I'm looking forward to hearing more about what's going on, what's really going on over there, what the Israelis are really feeling, what you think the end game of this is gonna be, and whatever else you have to tell us.

So, with that you know, we can get this discussion started. Jim, what, how, how do you want to start this?

[00:05:57] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Well, Mark's actually going to guide us. He, he thinks

he's going to

be guiding us. I want to

watch this happen, but that's the goal

[00:06:04] **Dr. Mark Turman:** As everyone can already tell I've already been overwhelmed by trying to control these three guys and they have deep relationship, lots of history and, and most importantly, they have lots of fun with each other.

So as is already the case, Reuben, they're doing more talking than they should be. So, would you like to say hello this morning?

[00:06:27] **Reuben:** First of all, Shalom to everyone. I have to go to from the good company to a few. A few things that are, are not the most happiest, as Mike already said I think that this is the hardest moment that Israel has gone through, uh, in my opinion in the 75 years. But just something personal, and it is that I was born in Oraner is two miles from Gaza. And when monsters entered on the 7th of October. So their plan was to go to, to the first kibbutz on the line before my kibbutz. There is one before it's called kibbutz eras, and then moved to, passed to my

kibbutz. And they were fighting in kibbutz eras. Kibbutz Ares understood that there is no way for them to, to, to stop.

There were around 50 monsters trying to enter to, to the kibbutz. they asked the people of my kibbutz. go and help and it was these type of decisions that you take that it's an incredible decision because the, the easiest this, I mean, the most common sense decision is to come and say, wait a minute, I'm not going to go and defend now my neighbors. I need to have my own protection. But the decision was to go and help the next kibbutz.

[00:08:00] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Silence.

[00:08:07] **Mike Fanning:** is

[00:08:11] **Reuben:** to, not to Kibbutz Oraner and not to Kibbutz Erez, they continued to the city of Sderot that unfortunately received a strong hit.

So, This is more or less how, how our life began on the 7th of October. And right now, the people of my kibbutz are all evacuated. I have to say that they are, some of them are happy, not all of them, but some of them are happy because they are in Jerusalem in a five star hotel called, in a great hotel.

I mean, for someone who is a farmer to go to a five star hotel. Is something amazing, but there is nothing nicer and better than to be home. And for the last three months, they are living in a hotel.

[00:08:54] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Jim, if I could ask you for just a moment to explain to those of our audience that may not know what a kibbutz is. Could you give a brief definition? If you get it wrong, Reuben can, can straighten you out.

[00:09:06] **Dr. Jim Denison:** And as he typically does, you know, so often happens. So yeah, even if I'm right, he will still do that. And so, you know, kibbutz is a, is a small community who chooses to live together in a way that is more communal than we in the States really can understand. There's a joint sharing of property. All the decisions are made by the group together.

They essentially do life together. Most of the kibbutz seem are agricultural in nature, and they really do provide in so many ways the, the, it's in someone who is kind of the breadbasket of Israel. The agricultural center of Israel is what we're talking about right now, not just up in the Galilee to the north, but especially down in the Negev, around the Gaza area.

So it's communities of people who have chosen to live life. They do school together, they do business together. They share their economy together, and they've just chosen to do life together in that kind of community. So for one to defend the other is really something we don't understand in our culture because that's not their kibbutz. That's not their community. That's a different community from theirs. And yet they've chosen to do this as Reuben says because their allegiances to each other as the state and to each other as human beings. The Jewish people see each other as sacred as made in the image of God. Hamas sees people as a means to the end of accomplishing their terrorist goals Palestinians and Jews, Israelis, and Arabs.

We can talk about that. That's why they victimized their own Palestinian people so fully. But the Jews see each person as sacred and valuable, and they're willing to risk their life, even give their life for their neighbor because that's just how they live. That's just part of who they are. It's one of the reasons I love them so much.

[00:10:39] **Mike Fanning:** If I can add one thing, if I can add one thing about a kibbutz some of us may think, well, a kibbutz, these people just live out in the desert and they don't know what's going on. Some of the greatest leaders in Israel's history were born on a kibbutz. Like, for

example, David

Ben Gurion.

Was born on a kibbutz.

So, don't, don't equate a kibbutz with like living out in the middle of nowhere. No, these are, these are leaders and past, future and present leaders of Israel have been born on a kibbutz.

[00:11:05] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Reuben's father was in Ben Gurion's original cabinet. Reuben's father, he won't tell you this, but he brought adoption services into Israel. Reuben has, I can never remember, Reuben, how many brothers, adopted brothers and sisters you have?

20?

20 adopted brothers and sisters because of Reuben's father who, on a kibbutz, his whole life, I guess, Reuben

[00:11:26] **Reuben:** Yeah.

[00:11:27] **Dr. Jim Denison:** and yet in the original cabinet of Israel to Mike's point.

[00:11:31] **Mike Fanning:** But it's sad because the kibbutzes were the ones that were hit first. You know, they, you know, right around the Gaza border, it's, there's some cities like Strot and some others, but it's these kibbutzes that were hit hard and, you know, one kibbutz lost almost all their members on this, in this attack.

I mean, Reuben knows

these people.

[00:11:51] **Reuben:** one fourth

of the kibbutz is or kidnapped or lost. In other words, every one out of every four disappeared from the, I mean, the kibbutz had disappeared. That is kibbutz near Oz.

So,

[00:12:08] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Reuben, Reuben, I know there's not one answer. Is there, like, how many kibbutz might there be in Israel, and what would be like maybe an average size of a kibbutz?

[00:12:20] **Reuben:** so in Israel, there are a little bit less than 300 kibbutzim. In percentage, we're talking, it's very low. We're talking about less than 3 percent of the population of Israel. So it's very, very low. Saying this, the kibbutzim in Israel produce more than 50 percent of the agriculture.

Around 40 percent or so of the industry.

So, these are pillars of Zionism. In other words, these are pillars of the existence of the state of Israel. And these, these people like my parents and others. They were sent there by the government of Israel, but they felt and they feel that that is their obligation to be there, not only farming the land, but to protect and defend every single inch of the land of Israel. So some kibbutzim are 400, some kibbutzim are 700, a big kibbutz will be 1, 000 people.

So, so, so that's more or less, yeah.

[00:13:39] **Dr. Mark Turman:** So by the decision to strike the kibbutz, that would be like, I mean, that's, that's striking not just at a collective group of people, but it's, by what you're describing an attack upon a fundamental part of the overall economy and the overall support structure of the nation, right? These, as you said, they're pillars of the nation.

[00:14:02] **Reuben:** correct. In other words at the moment you go and you attack the kibbutz Be'eri, Miroz, Mefalsim, all these kibbutzim, it means that immediately you're making damage eventually to the economy of Israel to the farmers, et cetera. That's the reason why we, a group of people that I organized. We go every Monday and Thursday to work with the farmers in that area to help them. And we buy their products and we bring it to the soldiers. So it's a win win situation. It's a win situation for the farmer, that we can help and support them with pomegranates, oranges, etc. It's a win situation for the soldiers that can enjoy it.

And it's a win situation for us that we feel that we're doing something good. For these people,

but

definitely it brought to a very complicated problem, even in the feeding of Israel.

[00:15:08] **Mike Fanning:** can I ask you a question? Ruben, okay, that's down by the border. You live in a city called Modi, Modi, which is in between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, basically. And, you know, Jim and I've been to Israel a ton. I've been there a lot. What would we notice if we step foot into Israel right now that is different than our normal past experience in Israel?

What's going on over there right now? How does it feel to be living there in the central part of Israel? What would Jim and I notice immediately when we got off the plane?

[00:15:41] **Reuben:** I think Israel today is a country that is in the mourning. is a country that is in the mourning. We wake up in the morning and we go to sleep and between the time we walked up and the time we went to sleep, we probably cry 12 times.

[00:16:04] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Well

[00:16:05] **Reuben:** for, I always say **You need more than thousand days to hear thousand stories of what happened here in Israel.** So, we, we are the same people, Mike.

When you're going to be here in Israel, you're going to find very strong, strong people. Very strong. We are very gathered. Very, we feel that we are together today. Very, very much. But we are in the morning. We are in the morning of something that we had never thought that could happen to us.

And it doesn't matter if you live in Modiin, in Tel Aviv, in Jerusalem. You go out in Modiin, and you see people drinking coffee. And you go out in Tel Aviv, and you see people in the restaurants. Life continues, but there is a soldier that went back from Gaza and when, when he

saw everyone in the restaurant at the beginning, he got upset, like coming and saying, wait a minute, we are fighting in Gaza and you guys are here in restaurants. But then two seconds after he realized what's going on he understood that the fact that he's fighting in Gaza permit people to continue doing their normal life. So are you going to see another Israel? eh, geographically? No, but spiritually we as people, I think that's something. And dramatic happened on the 7th of October.

Yeah.

[00:17:51] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Mark if I could add real briefly one of the things I've so admired over the many years of knowing Israel and being there as I've been privileged to do it It's the degree to which they do exactly what Reuben just said as one way of fighting the terrorists. One of the ways they understand that they fight the terrorists is by refusing to give in to the terrorists.

By refusing to let the terrorists manipulate them. For instance, one time I was there and it was pointed out that this coffee shop I was in, there had been a terrorist attack the previous year. At that very spot and there've been several people that were killed and I said well in the states there'd be a memorial here.

There'd be a big plaque. They would have probably torn it down. They said no here that would be giving into the terrorists. So they clean it up. They mourn the dead Of course they do but they move on with life.

Otherwise, they're letting the terrorists win

[00:18:34] **Reuben:** Correct.

[00:18:35] **Dr. Jim Denison:** how you have to do it when you're surrounded by enemies as they are.

And that's part of what makes their culture so unique and so much that we can learn from, I think.

[00:18:43] **Reuben:** So, so it's exactly like that. I mean, and you don't get used to it. You don't get used to hear booms and run to the shelter. You don't get used to it. Whoever tells you I'm, I'm used to it. He's lying. You don't get used to it. But. Life. Is much stronger than everything else. One, and two, at the moment I'm going to stay in my house not doing anything, then these monsters are the big winners, and we're not going to let them win.

So you're going to find Israel in, when you're going to come, and I hope that it will be tomorrow.
I

promise to take, I promise to take you to the desert.

[00:19:35] **Dr. Mark Turman:** ha ha

[00:19:36] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Now, Ruben, you've done that

[00:19:37] **Dr. Mark Turman:** ha

[00:19:38] **Dr. Jim Denison:** we, barely lived to tell the story. we, barely survived.

[00:19:42] **Mike Fanning:** You know, Jim, I was a little, I was a little worried when Reuben said, let's go to the desert and he was taking us to where they, you know, on Yom Kippur, they let the scapegoat go out into the desert to this mountain. And he took us there and I'm going now, now, what do we have to worry about

here?

I mean, are we going

to become the scapegoat?

[00:20:01] **Reuben:** that's what the scapegoat asked.

[00:20:04] **Dr. Mark Turman:** That's right.

[00:20:04] **Mike Fanning:** Exactly, exactly.

[00:20:06] **Dr. Mark Turman:** you notice Ruben said he was taking you to the desert. He didn't say anything about bringing you back.

[00:20:11] **Dr. Jim Denison:** That's

[00:20:11] **Mike Fanning:** Thank you. That

is correct. That's correct.

[00:20:15] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, Reuben. Um, unpack that a little bit more. There was a report that came out of the Tel Aviv University earlier this week about high levels of stress, anxiety, post traumatic stress disorder. Are you seeing other expressions of that, particularly among the children or the teenagers? Have you experienced or seen that personally, that this, obviously there would be a very high level of stress, but have you seen it manifested in other ways besides the expressions of grieving and unity that you've already talked about?

[00:20:50] **Reuben:**

Yeah, I agree with with the analysis. First of all we all went up in a a few more pounds. Because we've been eating much, much more. There are small things I'm going to take the example in our house. We always go to sleep and we have such, we have a big dog and just between you and me, she's a pit bull. So she's quite strong. We still close all the doors of the house from the 7th of October. That is something that we have never done. in other words, you see it in all Israel. The, there is more, more tension among the people, I would say. And it'll take long time to to, to bring it down. And that brings me to, to, to another project that I'm developing now. And I'm going to do the first pilot in two weeks. And it's completely connected to to your question mark. So one of the things that we see is that our soldiers that are coming back home. They, I don't know if they're, if they understand that they're in a trauma, but they're in a very hard situation because they come from, from a battlefield that is almost impossible.

I participated in a war. I don't know how to fight inside such hard conditions as they did. And they come back and now they have to try and go to normal life. And I've been talking to some of them and they have beautiful smile, but sad eyes. And so, so I decided that what we're going to do, I'm not a psychologist But I know how to take people to, to tour around.

So what we're going to do with my friends, and the first, the first pilot will be in two weeks, we're going to take them for one day, this time to enjoy the Dead Sea. And to relax and, and to, to have a quiet moments for one day for them. But the analysis and for sure Israel will have to, to, to make a deep, deep rest, I would say. Because right now we live in a hyper life, I would say.

[00:23:35] **Dr. Mark Turman:** and that's particularly true of the soldiers and their families, right?

[00:23:39] **Reuben:** correct. correct. The soldiers, the families, there are, there are some expressions that you don't know exactly how to live with. Some soldiers that went back home and say, you know what? I I felt more comfortable in Gaza with my friends.

[00:23:56] **Mike Fanning:** Hey, Mark, can I ask the next question?

Um,

Ruben look,

[00:24:01] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Silence.

[00:24:11] **Mike Fanning:** and Palestinians. They are not one in the same. And, you know, I've got Palestinian friends. Ruben, you've got Palestinian friends.

I mean, friends, not just acquaintances. Acquaintances, not just business partners, but how has this change in the Israeli

psyche affected your relationship with your friends who happen to also be Palestinian Arabs?

[00:24:36] **Reuben:** So, so, just for our case, I want to put like three different groups, if it's possible. The group number one is Arab Israelis. We have Arab Israelis, 20 percent of them are Arab Israeli, in other words, they are part of our state, they are Arabs, but they live here in Israel, they are Israelis like me and everyone. If the relations before 7th, the 7th of October was. More or less, I think that something dramatic happened on the 7th of October because when these monsters entered they did not differentiate between a Jewish Israeli and an Arab Israeli and the fact is that they killed Bedouins that were working in the fields of the kibbutz So the expression is Israelis, Jewish Israelis, are very surprised by the reaction of the Arab Israelis for the

[00:25:42] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Silence. Silence.

[00:25:58] **Reuben:** same boat. And that's important.

[00:26:00] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Silence.

[00:26:01] **Reuben:** Now with the Palestinians. I would put like two different groups, and it's not maybe very fair, but I, I will have to do that. One is our friends that are, most of them are Christians, Palestinian Christians, most of them, not all of them. And the other one are the Palestinians in general. So if you ask me, Reuven, what do I My relation with my friends, the Palestinians, and I have Christian friends, and I have some Muslim friends, will continue exactly the same. I'm not going to change my opinion on them because I want to believe. That they want to have good life together. But if you ask Israel as a nation, I think that Israel as a 7th of October had killed completely, completely the left wing of Israel who believed that coexistence is possible between us and the Palestinians. In other words, if you're here today, People that were on the left side of the political map of Israel, even people from the kibbutzim, they wanted to

help the Palestinians in Gaza. They don't want to hear about them. In other words, the 7th of October killed completely that relation and we will have to build it back again because they're not going to disappear from any place and we're not going to disappear. So, something dramatic has to be done. Saying this with my friends They're my friends. I change socks and underwear, but I don't change friends.

[00:27:58] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Which is why you're willing to have this conversation today, obviously, you know, yeah. And we're grateful.

[00:28:05] **Reuben:** Don't put it in the edition, take it out.

[00:28:13] **Dr. Mark Turman:** So Jim, could you unpack that, that was one of the most startling things? The first couple of times I went to Israel is to realize that Israelis, Jews, Palestinians living side by side, they're friends with each other. And how that often gets very narrowed in the reporting when it gets to our part of the world.

Can you kind of Unpack that with a little bit more definition.

[00:28:36] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, I'll try to do that and it is very confusing because it's race, region, and religion. and so if you lived in the area, we call this before 1948, you were living in Palestine. It'd been called Palestine from the second century, Bar Haqqa revolt, all the way till 1948, all the maps in Palestine. So anybody living in the geography.

of that land would be called Palestinian. Anybody living in the geography of Gaza and West Bank is called a Palestinian in terms of geography. Anybody living in the area in the middle that we think of as Israel would be an Israeli by geography. By race, the large majority of those living in the geography of Palestine are Arabs.

So they'd typically be Arab Palestinian, although there are some Jews, certainly Jewish settlements, especially in the West Bank. So they would be Jews living in Palestine. Then by religion, the large majority of those that live in Gaza and the West Bank are Muslim. So they would be Muslim Arab Palestinian.

However, as Ruben said before, there are a large number of Christians who are Christian Arab Palestinians. Some of our dear friends that we work with in Bethlehem are Christian Arab Palestinian. There are a number of Christian Jewish Israelis who are Jewish by race, Christian by religion, and Israeli by geography.

About 20%, as Ruben said, of those that live in the geography of Israel are Arabs. So they're Arab Israelis by race and region. The large majority are Muslim, so they would be Muslim Arab Israelis, although there's a good number in Nazareth and other places who are Christian Arab Israelis. And so your region is Israel or Palestine.

Your race is typically Arab or Jewish. Your religion would be Judaism, Islam, or Christianity. And it all gets mingled in together. Which is why it can be so confusing, but that's the shortest answer I can give you to why, why it is so complex. And in so many ways, you've just got lines drawn on maps that really don't on any level, as you know, Mark, you've been to Israel, you're, you're driving into the West Bank and you don't know it.

I mean, there's a crossing there, except for the crossing, it's the same highway, everything looks the same. But now, all of a sudden, you're in the West Bank, as opposed to Israel itself. So it's race, region, and religion. And there's some that are really it's kind of an intermingling sort of a thing in a way that can be pretty confusing.

[00:31:01] **Mike Fanning:** I.

gotta tell you too, whenever

we're on a tour, one of the first things

we do is we introduce our mutual good friend Doobie Ofek, who is our

driver.

Doobie

was

born before the state of Israel, so he has a birth certificate. He's a Palestinian Jewish Israeli. And people go, Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. I'm not, I'm not sure I understand this. But yet, there he is,

good old Doobie, Palestinian. Now, I know, Palestinian Jewish Israeli. And people go, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, I'm not sure. So, one thing this region does, it, it makes you rethink and reevaluate and have to throw out all the old definitions because they don't apply.

And I often hear people describe Israel, either online or in the news, and it'll take me ten seconds to realize they don't know what they're talking about.

[00:32:00] **Dr. Jim Denison:** They've never been there. They don't know.

[00:32:02] **Mike Fanning:** No, and it is so, so important that wherever you get your news from you be a discerning listener or reader, because you cannot get your information about Israel from one TikTok video, one podcast one article, one newspaper.

You have to All of it together in your brain and, and then start letting your God given reason, you know, kind of separate the good from the bad. And even I, I've been there so much. I'm confused at times about what's going on. And that's when I pick up the phone, call Ruben. And then of course, I'm even more confused.

So,

[00:32:45] **Reuben:** problem, is, the problem is that I, and I think mainly in the States. You see it more. I mean, we don't see it here, but you see people going and protesting for the Palestinians, etc. And, you know, you know, I, I say to myself, there are three questions that you should never ask. What is the age of a woman? What is the age of the woman? What is the salary of the husband? And for any protester that is for the pro Palestinian, what is the name of the sea and the river in between that they are shouting?

Those are the three things. In other words,

in other words, yeah, I mean, I mean, you really, I mean, people go and, and, so, I'm saying it because, Mike, you, you mentioned TikTok and all.

And I, I understand that this is a lost battle for Israel in a lot of, in a lot of ways. But but, the, the, the relation between Israel and the Palestinians was very compli complicate. And now it's even more complicated.

[00:34:01] **Mike Fanning:** were, we were out during the day and we, I said, let, let's just go down to, you know, Westminster Abbey and, and Parliament and Big Ben and all that. We come up out of the, the the underground and we're in the midst of a huge pro Palestinian rally.

And it was, I looked around and I saw these, I mean, for lack of a better term, just kids, 16, 17, 18 year old carrying around signs. It says from the river to the sea. And I looked at the people

I'm with and I go, they don't even know what that means. They have no idea that that means the extermination of the state of Israel.

They they don't know the ignorance that has been displayed

when it comes

[00:34:50] **Dr. Jim Denison:** That's right, they don't even know

[00:34:52] **Mike Fanning:** No. And, and I, every time I see something online or whatever, and the ignorance we've done a bad job of educating people about the region. Now granted, it is a pretty complicated place. There is, you just can't, you just can't pick up a, an article and figure out the Middle East.

You have to go there. You have to live there. I mean, it, it doesn't work that way.

[00:35:16] **Reuben:** one thing, Mike, one thing for sure is that in the next journey, when you come to Israel, I am not so sure that I will let you hug every Palestinian in Mount of Olives. Okay, that is something that we need to talk about.

[00:35:36] **Mike Fanning:** But you know what? They, they know who I am, Ruben, and, and, and, and they want to sell stuff. Anyway, you know what? I just, I mean, I, I'm so glad you're doing this, Jim and Mark, because, you know, it's just another little piece of data you can put in your, you know, data bank. And then Maybe next time you read something or hear something, it can be a filter through

[00:36:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yes.

[00:36:00] **Mike Fanning:** try to understand what is going on.

[00:36:03] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yes. And I would, I would just offer this as well. Like I said, it is a, it is a beautiful, unique amazing place in a lot of ways, but very complicated and would also just encourage our audience that. You know, I've listened to Jim for several years now talk about the intermingling of race, religion, and region.

And every time he says it, I hear a little bit more of understanding in it. But if you need to go back and put this on really slow speed, I know most people listen to podcasts on accelerated speed. If you want to go back and listen to just that part about. The intersection of race, religion, and region.

And then you go to Israel and you see, you see Jewish people, you see, Christians of various races, you see, Palestinians and you see them working side by side, you see them living side by side oftentimes very good friends. And it just, it looks in real time, very different from most of what you see on our news media and there's various reasons for that, but it, it's very different and much, much more vivid when you talk to someone like Reuben and when you actually go there and you see these people trying to figure out how to live together in a proper way and in a healthy way and Reuben, that's, you know, you said, Hey, this whole thing with this group of, of monsters, which is an apt description.

That these are to be distinguished. These folks from Hamas are to be distinguished from the Palestinian people in every way. But what do you hope in the long term? What kind of new relationship among the Israelis and the Palestinians? You think that this could finally push the energy level to the place of really seeing the two state solution come about.

Do you think it'll be something very different from that? What are you sensing within the country around that topic? Or is it just unclear at this point?

[00:38:15] **Reuben:** Um, well, we Our best dreams is to have Switzerland in front of us, not the Palestinians.

[00:38:27] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Silence.

[00:38:28] **Reuben:** But they are not going to disappear, and we

[00:38:31] **Dr. Mark Turman:** heart, rather

[00:38:32] **Reuben:** disappear. So,

I don't know how is it possible right now to go to a two state solution. I think that the atmosphere in Israel does not permit it. I mean, I'm talking not, not me, Reuven, but I'm talking the atmosphere in Israel. No one have the ability to come and talk about the two stage solution or something like that. But at the end of the day, we will have to deal with something that you can call it a better Palestinian authority or maybe bring some other forces inside. And so on one thing that for sure there is a consensus in Israel.

[00:39:22] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Silence. Silence. Silence.

[00:39:40] **Reuben:** wonderful by the government of Israel to declare all the time, we're going to take them out and Hamas is not going to exist. Hamas exists in the hearts of people. we have to

be honest with ourselves. It exists. It exists, I don't want to say that two million of them are Hamas. I'm not going to say that, but the, the, the, the ideology and exist inside the people. So the question is, what kind of forces can we bring to Gaza that, that, that will help the people to make better life. And I think that in my opinion, the best alternative that they, these people can have is With the Palestinian Authority, the same authority that have been, been criticized by Israel so many times. I think that at the end of the day, look, you do, you do peace with your enemy, not with your friend. Uh, so we have to start talking unfortunately not to Abu Mazen because the man is, is already a little bit old.

But we have to talk to the Palestinian Authority. And I think that we have to bring new forces into Gaza. And that is with the help of of you guys of the U. S. Forces like Saudi Arabia that can enter emirates that can enter. In other words, there are a lot of different ideas. 11 thing for sure. The Hamas should not be there as a government. Still, the distance to reach to a two state solution.

[00:41:26] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Okay.

[00:41:26] **Reuben:** I don't think that we're going It did not move it closer to the two state solution. It did not. Right now, we have to find someone that will take care of Gaza in a completely different way, that will invest in Gaza in a different way, that will not build a second city below with everything that exists there, that will make good to the people, that will control the educational system without the hatred hate.

that exists among the kids and among and change dramatically their, their life. It can be done. It can be done. You don't need to have a tunnel inside a school or a hospital, et cetera. I mean, hospitals are for, for, for, to give life, not to, to take life. So, so, if you ask me if I see a two state solution, it's impossible for me.

It's impossible to see that. I'm not sure that I'm going to see a two state solution in my life. I hope I, I will, because that is how I want to solve the problem. but

but Israel today, you have to understand that from the 2nd of October,

we had moved even more to the

right.

I would say in our words.

Um, the compromise is, is, is, is harder

now,

[00:42:51] **Mike Fanning:** I've

[00:42:52] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Jim, you, you had a

[00:42:53] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Mark, if I could add, yeah, just one word, maybe a possible hope. It's estimated that at least 80%. Of the aid that had been given by Qatar and other people to Gaza was misused by Hamas in corruption and in building terror tunnels and in building ways to destroy Israel. So if you could remove the infrastructure of Hamas, not the idea yet, but the infrastructure, and take that exact same aid That had been given all those millions of dollars over all these years to actually rebuild the

lives of the people

[00:43:22] **Mike Fanning:** going

[00:43:23] **Dr. Jim Denison:** funnel a different infrastructure You could see some good that could happen sooner rather than later and maybe that moves to the second piece, which is the idea of Hamas.

We don't understand this in this country. But if you were to go into a typical school room, from everything I've read, in West Bank as well as in Gaza, and you looked at the map sort of being taught, the map of what we call Israel, they call Palestine. From the time children first start education, they're taught this is Palestine, not Israel.

They're taught that the Israelis are occupiers. They're taught that Israel has stolen the land from its rightful Palestinian people. And that's not just Hamas. That's Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. That's been the case from 1948 forward, from the Nakba forward, as they would see it. And so there has to be, as Ruben says, a way of improving their lives on a level that will cause them then to perhaps see the Jews and the Israelis as their partners rather than their, their occupiers.

Because that's across the board, not just with Hamas, but maybe with a better infrastructure Some of the same funding could accomplish a good there that could perhaps move us in a way that could be more positive is a hopeful Possible outcome as we move forward here,

[00:44:33] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Mike.

[00:44:33] **Dr. Jim Denison:** You started Mm

[00:44:39] **Mike Fanning:** me that nothing's going to change until the leadership of both Israel and the Palestinian changes. And it seems like that what is lacking right now are statesmen that can look beyond what is happening now and look to the future.

I know we've talked about it, you know, statesmen over there haven't had a real. Good run. I mean, you look at Anwar Sadat. He comes out, says, I want to go to Israel. I want to make peace with Israel. He comes to Jerusalem. He speaks in the Knesset, goes home, gets murdered by, not an Israeli, but by a Muslim fundamentalist.

You have Itzhak Rabin, who said, We need to make peace with the Palestinians. He goes to the White House, shakes hands with Yasser Arafat, comes home, and is killed, not by a Muslim, but by a right wing Jewish zealot. So I'm just thinking, when are these statesmen, people who can look, not right now, but can look to the future, that's what Israel needs, that's what Palestinians need, are these people.

But yet, it's a, Dangerous job over there. And people who are statements seem not to be able to hang around. So, what's your thought on that, Ruben?

[00:45:53] **Reuben:** The, the, the basic feeling of people, and I think that this will happen we want to clean completely our life.

In other words, from the highest to the lowest, they have to go home. They have to go home, all of them from up to down. And I can, I I we, we say that the future, whoever comes and say, I know the future. So the prophecy was given today to the fools. So I'm not a prophet. But I can guarantee that if if if the government is not going to go out and we will have to go for elections, there will be more than 1 million people going up to the parliament in, in Jerusalem. Because one of the things that I agree and disagree with what you all said is that Israel, we are learning our lesson of the 7th of October.

We understand that the concept was wrong. For 20 years, we were living in a wrong concept. But because this is a democracy, so we are going to fight in order to change it dramatically. And hopefully bring new leaders, as you said, Mike, and, and, and, and change it. I am not sure that on the Palestinian side, because it's not a democracy in a lot of ways, So I'm not sure that they are ready to do something like that.

And when you ask yourself, okay, let's go for it. Then you ask yourself, who is the leader that can actually put all the puzzle in the Palestinians together? It's got to be someone. That is not from the Hamas and probably not so much from the Palestinian Authority. Someone in between but from our side, from the Israeli side, I, it's going to be one of my biggest surprises.

If if this government is going to continue. In 2024, I think, I think that people are just, just wait for the soldiers to go back home. We are all, it's not, it's not only that we are upset. We want to change because the concept was wrong. And at the end of the day, we failed in protecting. And giving normal life to

our civilians. At the, but the bottom line,

we had failed in defending Israel to such a degree

where 7th of October, probably the biggest tragedy that we had since the Holocaust had happened to us. So we. Are going to do everything possible to change the

government to change everyone and to bring new leadership, because I think you're right.

We need new leadership,

[00:49:26] **Mike Fanning:** whole room of

[00:49:27] **Reuben:** completely new leadership. We have to look at things now completely different. Yeah,

so I

[00:49:33] **Mike Fanning:** a great session, and

I've learned a lot from that.

[00:49:35] **Dr. Mark Turman:** I, we could go for a long

time. And you are a a wonderful, insightful, wise man. And

we thank you for spending some time with us today.

[00:49:45] **Mike Fanning:** it.

[00:49:45] **Dr. Jim Denison:** And Mark, let me add real

quickly, Ruben's doing this, I should have said this at the beginning. He's doing this in his third All right. I mean, he's not doing this in Spanish or in Hebrew. He is doing this in English. So he's translating in his brain, even as he's doing all of this stuff with us. And it shows you how brilliant he is that he's able to do that and how kind he is that he's willing to do that with the likes of us and not change us like his socks and underwear.

As he said earlier, I'm grateful to be to be in the friendship category as opposed to the socks and underwear category in

[00:50:16] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yes.

[00:50:17] **Dr. Jim Denison:** glad for that.

[00:50:18] **Reuben:** but I do want to say one word if

it's okay.

[00:50:21] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Please.

[00:50:23] **Reuben:** I want I want to say That if something incredible had happened in Israel is that we are hugging each other back again. For many, many reasons that I'm not going to enter. We had big debates politically, et cetera. And we almost couldn't stand each other. And now we are hugging each other. We are, we feel that we are in the same boat. And, I think that the power of Israel is in the fact that we are together now. And when we are together, one can break us.

No

one.

[00:51:07] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Okay.

[00:51:15] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Well, yeah, that's a, and that's a beautiful testimony, Reuben. That is a beautiful, beautiful testimony and, um, and we will pray for that and other good things to continue and, as we close out, just again, want to thank you and thank our audience for listening. And we hope this has been helpful to you.

It's been a blessing to me. I can say that. And I just wonder, Mike, would you be willing to pray us out and just pray for Israel, pray

[00:51:38] **Mike Fanning:** Sure,

sure, sure.

[00:51:41] **Dr. Mark Turman:** wants to do there. Let's pray.

[00:51:45] **Mike Fanning:** Thank you for our friends in Israel. Thanks for Ruben for, Doobie, for Danny, for Gotti, for all of our friends over there. We pray for their safety. We pray for their well being. We pray that this terrible tragedy will come to an end and that peace will come to the region.

If not peace as my Israeli friends say, quiet to the region. So Lord, we, we know that you are the Prince of Peace and we know that you desire that more than anything else. And we ask that you bring it to fruition. In the meantime, just be with our friends, protect them. Protect Israel, protect our Jewish friends, our Palestinian friends.

We just pray for them as well, that those who were caught in the middle, who had nothing to do with this. So Lord be with us all. And we look forward to the day when we can go back to Israel and step foot in your Holy land. Of course, we ask it all in your name. Amen.

[00:52:40] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Amen. Thank you

everybody. And Thank you to our audience. God bless you.