



[Sacred Cows] Episode 83. "Bibi's narcissism has become malignant. Great leaders must have the ability to empathize" – A lesson on leadership and the leader with the National Security Advisor of the Prime Minister."

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Prof. Uzi Arad was the National Security Advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu and the head of Malal, the Prime Minister's Office for Administration and Organization (2009-2011). Before that, he served as the Prime Minister's political advisor and head of the research department at the Mossad.

We met in his house in Tel Aviv, which is full of books on leadership. We talked about leaders in history, the personality profile that makes great leaders, the mental disturbances and impulses that fail them, and the cunningness of history that disrupts everything. We also talked about the man who, for many years, has been consistently leading Israel toward a dead end.

It was an enlightening conversation with a man who stands at the crossroads of the most important decisions Israel has to make and worries about the absence of local leaders whose stature and experience can save Israel from the deep pit it is sinking into these days.

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Uzi Arad, Shalom

Arad: Shalom

We agreed to talk about leadership. Aristotle spoke of the leader who uses three tools: ethos, logos, and pathos. Has anything changed since then?

Arad: The big question is, what makes a great leader? What are the virtues that bring success and greatness? And also the opposite, why do leaders fail?

Is there anything that is still valid and relevant since ancient times?

Arad: Yes. A great leader is the one who succeeds in his actions. This is the test of the outcomes, the historical legacy.

Can't there be a failed leader who had luck?

Arad: What do you mean luck? A failed leader who had bad luck?

How about a mediocre leader who had luck?

Arad: History judges by the outcome, and the question is, according to which outcome? For example, Napoleon unleashed a catastrophe on the French. The large armies he commanded died by the millions. In this sense, he impoverished France and inflicted on her a mortal blow. So in that sense, he was a failed leader. But looking at his many military victories, and most of his battles were victorious, he was a great general.

He is considered Napoleon the Great not because he crowned himself, but because of what he did in France as a leader. He enacted new laws, divided France into provinces, and established learning institutions. He has had phenomenal achievements in his lifetime. Some of the things he did are still alive and well in Europe.



Professor Uzi Arad. Photo: Yizhar Be'er

A large part of your books deal with leadership. What makes you interested in this topic?

Arad: Truman once said that to prepare to be a leader you need to know history and read geography books and biographies. In his simple, direct, and honest way, he wanted to say, read the biographies of leaders. Know these two things and you will know the whole history on one foot.

I'm interested in history and the seemingly trivial debate of who is more important, man or other things. There is no doubt that leaders shape the destiny of their nations.

Do you think leaders are more important than processes?

Arad: There used to be a naive thought that technology would flatten Planet Earth, globalization would spread and the whole world would become a global village. Based on that idea there was a belief that the world's rulers would become more similar to one another, and consequently, they would all become technocrats in gray suits, who would manage the world. This was a big mistake. Despite globalization and mutual influences, you can see many types of leaders today.

In Russia, a former KGB man named Putin rules. In America, a strange man that no one has ever seen before, called Trump, is going to be elected. In France, a different president. In England, three prime ministers have already been replaced. The

second one, no one knew who it was, and by the time they learned who it was, he had already disappeared. And all of them are different in their character, background, style, personality, and stories. No one is like the other. When you see this you learn that their significance has not diminished because of globalization. Russia is still more influenced by what Putin does and Israel by what Netanyahu does.

When you go back in time, do you find common traits or weaknesses that caused leaders to fail?

Arad: It should be said that a leader at the end of his historical journey is not the same person he is at the beginning of his journey. The Netanyahu of 2024 is not the same Netanyahu of 1996. Not his personality, not his pace, not his energy, not his priorities, not his friends, not his policies. So even during their lives, leaders change.

The ancient historians already knew how to recognize the common features of leaders and wrote books about this topic. In modern times, they also try to do it. The presidents of the USA are an interesting laboratory for this topic.

There have been 40-plus presidents, almost all of whom served limited terms. Except for Roosevelt, none of them had served more than two terms. They all ruled the same country, from the same capital, and quite a lot is known about them. Almost everyone has had biographies written about them by historians from the right and the left of the political spectrum.

There is already an existing comparison. If you search American Presidents' Ranking on Google, you will get complete tables showing how they are comparatively ranked in different fields.

For example, in the ranking of the American Historical Association that convened two years ago—a thousand historians were asked to rate the presidents, whether they are great, very great, or mediocre—you will see a matrix in colors, how the same leader appears according to 15 different scores. You can immediately see and start aggregating (combining details) points showing, for example, the presidents considered the worst in the history of the United States...

Who are the best five presidents?

Arad: We'll get to them soon.

No one remembers the worst ones for sure...

Arad: We don't remember but there is a reason why we don't. It is always the one responsible for a disaster or the one that a disaster followed him who is considered the worst. Even here until recently, poor Golda Meir was ranked as the worst of our prime ministers. Do you want to know why?

Because nothing good happened during her term that showed her favorably. Golda had no great achievements. On the other hand, she had a very big mishap during her term as prime minister, so she paid for it.

What was the worst day? The answer is clear....

This is not so clear to everyone, but we'll get to it later...

Arad: When we look at the scores, of course, the question is what was the reason for that? Was it their virtues?

The American historian Fred Greenstein conducted a systematic comparison between all the presidents of the USA since World War II. When you ask who is considered the greatest, the answer is automatic; It is almost always Washington, the founder, Lincoln, the great president of the Civil War, then Roosevelt. Among the great presidents are also Madison and Jefferson.

None of the opening five presidents are contemporary.

Arad: True. There was one blunder from 1933 to 1960. For 27 years, the USA had only three presidents: Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower. Roosevelt was a great president, Truman, history says he was serious, and Eisenhower is also considered one of the best of the bunch.

The outcome was that for 27 consecutive years, there were only three presidents, and all of them, luckily, while serving during difficult times, were all good presidents.

From 1961 until today there have been many more presidents. Some were assassinated on the way to the presidency, some served only one term, and not even one of them is considered to be a great president. The one who got more points relative to the others was Reagan...

Because of the Communist Bloc?

Arad: Yes, because at the time he was winning the Cold War. No one can take that away from him.

After Eisenhower, there was Kennedy, who was assassinated and didn't accomplish anything, because he got bogged down in Vietnam. Johnson preferred to retire. Nixon was very successful in his first term as president, breaking into China, and ending the Vietnam War, but in the second term, he got involved with Watergate and was kicked out.

Are you describing a phenomenon of the modern leadership crisis?

Arad: No. The same historian, Fred Greenstein, examined all the presidents according to six criteria: intelligence, emotional intelligence and empathy, decision-making ability and work with the staff, forward-thinking and vision, communication skills, and finally, political wisdom.

As a wise historian, he did not assign numbers. He relied on historical data, and for this, there is an enormous amount of material. What transpired was something like this; It is not possible to get a high score in all six categories. It is similar to Olympic

athletes. One cannot be both the best high jumper and the best weight lifter. Each of the presidents had a different profile. But he was looking for one quality: if you have it, then you got it, and if you don't, you will fail. And he discovered that quality. We'll get to it right away.

But first, let me give you an example of IQ and intelligence. This is not a strong criterion. Why?

Because you don't become a president of the USA with an average intelligence. The majority had good intelligence, and some were very good. Jimmy Carter was brilliant, and Nixon was pretty brilliant too. So it's not something you can say he has it or doesn't have it. Idiots or morons were not presidents.

There was only one quality that if you didn't have it, you failed and that was emotional intelligence and empathy.

Which is also a recipe for a good relationship...

Arad: This is an important recipe in every social construct. Even in a relationship. The ability to understand others. In other words, it's the opposite of narcissism. A narcissist is someone full of himself, who thinks that the whole world revolves around him, is dark about others, and is not at all able to understand his pain and suffering. There were presidents like that, and it killed them.

But if we take people with an imperial profile, who reached greatness, they possessed a narcissistic side, and yet...

Arad: Look, everything in moderation is good. For example, it is good that you sweat, because it is the body's mechanism to stay cool. But if you start sweating profusely, and dripping water all over the place, you will dehydrate. In some cases, too much of a good thing can be bad.

To maintain some kind of optimism, every person needs to value himself. In this sense, Einstein was a bit of a narcissist. He knew he was a great scientist, believe me. But this is not narcissism. This is an authentic recognition of his worth. Every person who wants to succeed should know his worth. But when you think you're a prophet, when you think you're a messiah, when you think you're above everyone, when your opinion of yourself is infinitely higher than it should be, it gives you delusions of grandeur. The problem with narcissism is that, as long as it exists to an appropriate degree, it is benign, even a good and necessary thing. However, if it is excessive, it becomes malignant...

Well, then we'll talk about whether it's relevant these days...

Arad: But I want to return to the question you've asked. Are there common qualities for leaders?

Richard Gabriel writes about the greatest leaders in history in his book *Great Soldiers in Ancient History*. For example, Sargon II of the Assyrian Empire, Amenhotep III from Egypt, Julius Caesar and Scipio Africanus in Rome, Alexander

the Great from Macedonia, and Hannibal with the Carthaginians. He more or less stopped there. But some will say, let's take it to the present day. We will take great leaders, like Churchill, Napoleon, and others... He described each of them in the book and described their common denominators.

For example, he made an interesting point about each one of these leaders. All of them were involved in battles from a young age. Fighting in a war back then was a terrible thing. Today, when you do archeological excavations and discover skeletons of warriors, you find that it was not like in the movies. The actor thrusts a sword and the man falls. In those days they confirmed the killing eight times. They would thrust a sword into a body with fatal force and then they would... It was very violent. So to be present in a battle in ancient times was a formative experience that tested courage and strength, cunningness and resourcefulness. All these leaders fought in battles at the age of 15, 16, and 17, and it hardened them. The second thing was that most of them had a physical presence. They looked good, not necessarily like models, or tall or stout...

However, the most interesting thing was that all of them received the best education possible at their time.

Let's start with the Egyptian Amenhotep III. He studied with the scribes, who were the wise men of Egypt. He had studied in the temples and the scribes taught him everything they knew: writing, history, astronomy, engineering... And he was the leader who fought at the great battle of Megiddo.

Sargon II, not only did he receive the best education a prince could get, but he was also an intellectual. He spoke the languages of all the peoples that surrounded Assyria. He studied everything known at his time: astronomy, engineering, languages, etc.

Hannibal, whose father was a general, studied with Greek tutors. He studied in Carthage. According to tradition, the teachers came to teach him, and he received the typical aristocratic education. He also lived in his father's court. Almost all Romans received classical Greek education because the tutors were Greek.

Look at what happened with Alexander the Great. He was the son of Philip II, King of Macedonia. Philip II was a brave warrior and he had a brat of a son, the talented Alexander. He wanted his son to get the best education. So he asked where he could find a good learning institution in Greece. They told him to go to the academy in Athens. And who was running the academy? They told him, someone called Aristotle.

So, he rode on his horse to Athens and came to the head of the academy and said to him: Listen, I have a son in Macedonia. He and his friends are of the gymnasium age and need an education, come and be their tutor.

Aristotle told him: I can't. I have an academy here to run.

So Philip tells him: Listen, I'm ready to pay you a lot. It will cover three years of work at the academy. Come to me. So they made a deal. Aristotle came to the Macedonian capital and became Alexander's teacher.

Now I ask you: "If you studied physics with Einstein, it would look good, right?" That's what he got. He was taught by the greatest of his generation. This is education!

All the others did too, They got the best education.

You also discover that most great leaders have a measure of boldness. With cowardice, you don't do great things. You may survive, but to do things, to dare, you need courage.

Where did this self-confidence come from?

Sometimes it was education. But it wasn't just education, it was everything. They also studied military conventions, and they studied the law. They knew that they knew everything there was to know. In other words, when they talked with their advisors, they knew almost as much as they did. It gave them the sense that they knew what they were doing.

What about confidence?

Arad: It also gave them self-confidence. When you combine combat experience and leadership performance in battle with acquired knowledge you get a good formula to raise people who may become leaders when the right circumstances appear.





Professor Uzi Arad. Photos Yizhar Be'er

If you go back in time, who was the figure or leader who impressed you with their leadership ability?

Arad: Look, first of all, sometimes, when we talk about great leaders, sometimes we make a mistake and mention the two great leaders of the 20th century, one is Hitler and the other is Stalin. So you have to ask, how?

The fact that they were the scum of the earth is clear, but they also brought disaster upon their people.

It's not that they failed to bring prosperity to their people or failed to leave behind prosperous nations. They finished their term in disasters.

So why are they considered great leaders? Because they had an impact on the course of history. So, you can say that a great leader is one whose influence on history is great.

If this is the test, then fine. But I'm talking about great leaders in the sense of those who did good for their people and the nation they led.

So who are the great leaders?

In the 20th century, everyone took their hats off to Churchill. You can see other leaders who demonstrated a high degree of leadership. Under their leadership, their countries became more advanced, and stronger, overcame their enemies, and improved the welfare of their citizens...

But if you take Churchill's model, he was undoubtedly dominant and impressive in how he conducted the war, but the fact is that at the end of the war, it did not give him the credit to continue. So, could it be that one type of leadership is suitable for times of emergency and another is needed for times of peace?

Arad: Good question. This brings you to the conclusion that the one who should judge leaders and their level is not the electorate. After all, leaders who inflicted a holocaust on their country were also elected by the people.

Had elections been held in Germany in 1944, Hitler would have been re-elected. There was no popular opposition to Hitler. He was killing them in droves, he was already sending children into battle. In this sense, if you delegate the authority to determine who is good for the people, the Germans are not a good example. And neither are the British.

What does this tell us about the democratic system?

Arad: It tells us that the democratic system is the worst, apart from all the others. The virtue of the democratic system lies in its legitimacy and that the majority decides who will be at the top rather than the monarch. In other words, monarchy rules by the legitimacy of heredity.

You know, a French general once joked with me and asked, "Do you know in what way monarchy is better than democracy?"

I asked him, what?

"It's about the origin of heredity. When it comes to the monarchy, genetics determine who will rule. In a democracy, elections determine who will rule."

"Now look," he said, "according to the laws of genetics, an imbecile is born every third generation. According to democracy you never know. You can get two in a row. That's why the monarchy is more orderly."

You don't show much empathy for the historiosophical approach of Michael Har-Segor. For example, love, when a leader loses focus because of his mistress, or a circumstance like hemorrhoids in Napoleon's buttock that decides the fate of a war?

Arad: You are right that Har-Segor liked episodic history. He did it in his broadcasts with...

With Alex Ansky...

Arad: With Alex Ansky. And it was very charming. He told many stories, some were a little inaccurate, but they were great and he endeared history to many people. But history sometimes happens beyond the small things.

There is a famous answer, which I think Ranke (Leopold von Ranke, a German historian in the 19th century. Y. B.) said: "History is one thing after another—it's one thing that happens after another thing that happens."

And there is also another conversation, I think it was one of the British Prime Ministers, maybe MacMillan, who was about to get into his car, and a journalist asked him, "Say, what are the engine wheels of history?"

So McMillan answered: "Events, my young man, events, events that happen."

Let's return to Bibi, who once wanted to say he could see far ahead. And indeed he could see far ahead, like a chess player, see many moves ahead. It is an important quality. But the phrase he used was 'to see the unborn'. Now you say, wait, what does it mean 'seeing the unborn' here?

The analogy is that there is an embryo in the womb and it takes nine months in the womb until it is born. You don't know exactly what will come out, but you know that the embryo will develop and be born.

But history is not built on embryos. Many times you can't know what will come out of that embryo.

I'll give you an example. If—and I wish it hadn't happened for many reasons—Yoni Netanyahu had not fallen in battle, Bibi would never have become prime minister. And it would have been good. [Yoni was Bibi's brother. g.b.]

Because Yoni would have overshadowed him?

Arad: It wouldn't happen because Yoni was meant for royalty. Yoni was first. Bibi didn't think he had a chance at all. He wanted to become an architect or a businessman and planned to go to America. He did not see a future for himself in Israel. The reason he returned to Israel is, to a large extent, a result of Yoni's death [in Entebbe, Uganda, during an operation to rescue Israeli passengers taken hostage by Palestinian and German terrorists on a hijacked plane in 1976. g.b.].

It was an unforeseen incident. Because a Ugandan sentry shot Yoni and hit him, and because Yoni was there at that moment and was killed, it was a big shock to the country, but it also ended the future of this talented guy.

Then Bibi's life changed. And if you ask what led to the rise of Bibi, you can say, the fall of Yoni.

A great American psychologist, who was the head of the psychology department at the CIA, wrote a book about narcissism. He divided the narcissists into their types and Bibi is there in the category of reluctant leaders. What does it mean?

That they became leaders against the odds?

Arad: They were not meant for it at all, They became leaders because those who were meant for leadership in their family died.

And that's how it is. John F. Kennedy, his brother Joseph, was the eldest, destined for greatness, but he volunteered for a dangerous flight mission and died in combat in World War II.

The other was Bassel Assad, Bashar's more successful brother, who was killed in a car accident (1994).

The third is Yoni, who fell in combat. He was meant for royalty and Bibi stepped into his shoes.

The fourth is (Rajiv) Gandhi. (His mother Indira Gandhi was assassinated in 1984. g.b.)

In all four cases, death was somewhat strange and very unusual. Then number two who never prepared for this comes in and is suddenly appointed as the successor.

And all kinds of things happen to him. First, he has to learn the profession of being a leader. And then, he can't avoid thinking "If my brother were alive, I wouldn't be here."

I think that Bibi to this very day asks himself, "If Yoni had been prime minister, would he have been a better prime minister than I am?"

Over the years, I think Bibi tried to prove to himself that even though he inherited the post of prime minister, he could be as good as his brother, and this became one of his drives. It is also his motivation and desire to be great.

So reluctantly we are back to Bibi. You said that Bibi of 2024 is not who he was 20 years ago. In what way is he different?

Arad: Look at his learning curve. In any field. Think about even the simplest thing. A man is appointed to be chairman of a bank. He learns on the job. And with Bibi for example, from Bibi of 96' and Bibi of 97', almost every year you saw improvement. Each year he learned more about the mechanics and the operations. These were obvious things. But with Bibi, being on the job lasted for too long. He just ruled for a long time...

Do you think there was a point in Bibi's career as prime minister when he shifted, maybe we could call it 'from being a possibility to becoming a risk'?

Arad: The truth is no, and I will explain myself right away. When a person is in power it gives them a huge advantage against any opponent. When you are the incumbent you don't compete in power relationships. You are a ruler, you control the budgets, appointments, and everything.

Your opponent is outside. He is in the desert. He has nothing. The advantage is yours. And here, Bibi, after three years, crashes. And who wins? Ehud Barak, and by a large margin.

It was a very shocking experience and it changed Bibi. And that was why he wanted to return. The urge to come back (to the prime ministership) a second time is typical of people with Bibi's profile. He could have said: "I tried and didn't succeed, now I'm going to do what I want." But no, he had to prove himself. He must do it for a second time. So he says, "I will learn lessons. I now know what I have to do," and many things he did in his second term were the outcome of the lessons he had learned. Never again! "I will never lose again." There was also a learning curve. Now you see what this learning has wrought on us.

He discovered that he needed to make sure that there would never be a situation in which the settlers or the left would see him as a traitor. He crashed after the Wye negotiations. He will never repeat this mistake. (The Wye negotiations took place at the Wye River Conference Centers in Maryland in October 1998. The Wye River Memorandum was a political agreement negotiated between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and facilitated by the US. g.b.)

He also understood that he needed to make sure that his opponents were weak. He had to ensure he had no rivals, neither within the party nor outside the party. He always wanted a vulnerable opponent who was easy to deal with. He wanted to have an opponent because without an opponent it was impossible to maintain a political system, but he wanted an opponent who would be an eternal loser.

He also discovered that he controlled the election schedule so he didn't allow any elections (when it was inconvenient for him). He determined the best time for him to call the elections.

He also learned the hard lesson that there are people who want to succeed him and that the political fight is brutal. So he fought. Loyalty is important to him. Because of his character, which is also paranoid, he developed ways of thinking that everyone is chasing me, so I have to play divide and conquer. I have to know how to fight. He does a lot of things now that are the modern Bibi.

Are you actually profiling a classic Machiavelli prince-type leader?

Arad: Machiavelli gave correct advice. His advice was not invalid. This is what was required according to the needs of the political situation. The political process is a process of fights, sometimes even violent. So it is clear that Machiavelli's advice is realistic, and clever, explaining how to manage a political contest. It is a mistake to say that Machiavellianism is immoral. Machiavellianism is the morality of the governing body.

But you have to do other things, not just deal with eliminating the opposition. For example, you should fulfill your duty to govern and govern well. If because of your self-interest, you appoint losers and low-lives who are loyal to you to important positions, you are not fulfilling your role. Machiavelli will not suggest that you appoint Ben Gvir as Minister of National Security.

You worked alongside Netanyahu quite a bit and were close to him. How would you define this type of leadership and its profile?

Arad: We spoke about leadership earlier, so literature and history know how to describe leaders or write biographies. Even Plutarch (a Greek philosopher, author, and priest who wrote biographies of personalities and leaders in Greece and Rome. Y.B.), talked about the personal sides, the style, and the character of leaders.

The biblical writer, for example, tells the story of King Saul who was consumed with envy for David. Envy is also a character trait. When you describe leaders you also describe their character traits, behavior, worldview, the people around them, and the surrounding influences.

This brings us to look at the personal side of Bibi. If a corporate consultant had to prepare a case for managers of a certain organization who consider hiring Bibi to be the chairman of an investment company, he or she wants to check that this man has the right ingredients. He would ask for an opinion on the man, on his life, his CV, his choices, his behavior, his weaknesses, his social connections, his physical health as well as his mental health. All these things project how the candidate will fulfill his role.

If they prepared something like that on Bibi, and they did... Be sure. The CIA created a profile of him, I already told you.

And when they write an opinion about a person, they write it for a clear purpose and not for history. They want to know how he was until now and how he will be if he is in office. How will he behave, will he lead revolutions, will he be tough in negotiations, will he be bold, will he be charismatic, will he be creative, will he be conservative, is he vulnerable, how will he function?

And you see unanimity about his personality among all who worked on his profile. When you come to personality traits that are defined as disorders or impulses, you can see that they recognized traits that appeared in his childhood. It is, first of all, a narcissism that becomes more and more malignant with the passing years, to the point of disconnection with reality, inability to read a situation, and distortion.

The second thing is paranoid impulses.

And the third thing is domination, having a controlling personality trait.

All these things are formulated in the clinical language of psychologists and psychiatrists, who know how to treat them.

Look, we talked about Churchill. It's known that Churchill suffered from depression. He had suffered from bouts of depression which he called "my black dog days."

His black dog.

Arad: He woke up in the morning and didn't feel like doing anything. He was depressed and unmotivated. He couldn't get up. It was like a gray weight had descended upon him...

He had a doctor close to him, who knew this happened to him from time to time. So what did they do in this case? Did they say he was not fit to be prime minister? No way...

But he knew it would end. He had a doctor close to him who knew this happened to him from time to time. So what did they do in this case? Did they say he wasn't fit to be prime minister?

Not at all... They knew that when he was struck by such a day, they let him rest for a day or two. They gave him some sedatives, and it would pass. And during those two days, his deputy took over. His deputy was in the picture and knew what to do. He was used to it, and that's how the government kept running. You don't dismiss someone because of such attacks.

We also had such things. Prime Minister Begin had this problem. He was prone to moments of melancholy. Shimon Peres was sometimes bipolar. He had bursts of enthusiasm and vision—if you will, mania—and moments of deep depression because of some irritating headline in the newspaper.

Are you saying that all our prime ministers suffered from some kind of...

Arad: Not at all. We all have health issues. You may call it a healthy body and a healthy mind, but some say that the mind is made of chemicals, so the health of the

body and mind are not exactly dichotomous. But call it health, which is a mental and physical state. We are all affected by it.

Kennedy, for example, was very sickly as a child.

He had severe back problems...

Arad: A lot more than that. They have said the prayer of the dead over him, twice, three times, which the Catholics do for a patient who may die. He suffered from many illnesses. The man, in fact, experienced pain every day of his life. Because he had so many illnesses and was on so many medications, when he was already president he was receiving so many drug cocktails that some would say he loaded his body with tons of chemicals. He was no longer the same person.

Was he drugged?

Arad: Some of the drugs had side effects that affected his behavior. For example, some of the medications they gave him disrupted his sleeping patterns. Think, he is the president of the USA, you want him alert and sharp and here he is given drugs that do not allow him to sleep regularly. So if you give him sleeping pills, he won't get out of it.

In the middle of his term, he changed doctors, and the new doctor changed his drug cocktail and added a drug whose side effect increased his sexual drive. He already had a strong sexual drive, and now he has more fuel, so it is clear why he needed more... (laughs).

Since the performance of a leader is important, his medical file should be known to avoid mishaps...

What should we demand from a leader or the prime minister to ensure they are trustworthy?

Arad: The leader asks for the voter's trust in several ways. At first, the voter sends him to his first term. The next time, the voter accepts his rule and authority, but under the condition that the leader fulfills his responsibilities, performs well, and gives what he should give according to what he was elected to do.

If he is the defense minister, he should provide security through security agencies. That's his duty. He's not doing me a favor. So you want him to do well. Now, before you send him out and choose him over someone else, you want to know as much as possible how well-equipped he is, and how well-prepared he is to fulfill his duty. You want to know everything you can find out.

Should there be a fixed format? Some kind of metrics?

Arad: You want failed leaders not to return to power. One way to do it is by being more picky and strict. In England, for example, every member of parliament goes through a preliminary examination. A very discreet official from the secretariat of the parliament is responsible for finding out many things about the candidate. The candidate must report, for example, all his properties, his capital, his finances, and those of his family members. He must tell them everything about his life, jobs, and achievements. He has to report if he is involved in any legal dispute. He also has to provide a report on his health. This far-reaching exposure is binding. If you have to get a security clearance, you have to surrender your medical file, including your sexual preferences, behaviors, and history. All this can be subjected to scrutiny and follow-ups.

Would the members of our government pass this threshold, if it were done here?

Arad: We don't have any restrictions. This is very interesting. Let's say the candidate is Helen Keller, do you remember her?

She was blind, mute, and deaf. A woman of great abilities, but very disabled. Can she be a minister in Israel? There is no clause written that prevents her from becoming one. There is no condition on physical ability as long as there is mental clarity and no intellectual disability. It is not even stated anywhere that you have to know how to read and write

Let's look at current events. It is no secret that we are in the worst situation imaginable in the history of the Zionist enterprise. To what extent do you see the leader's responsibility in what is happening right now?

Arad: It is certainly true in many respects. But today it seems like a truism (self-evident truth). Everyone says it. They say it in clear language. They say 'his survival'. As if 'survival' is a right, available to everyone.

So no. He is not fighting here for his survival. He is fighting to remain in a position that does not necessarily belong to him.

This position is not only his, but he wants it. So he holds onto his seat. He wants it for reasons that benefit him and only him, and he uses his decisions about national issues for his interest.

That's how it should be phrased.

He found himself in a situation where he got entangled in legal proceedings, accused of several criminal offenses, some potentially serious. This extraordinary situation led him to his assessment that he could be convicted. And if he is convicted it could bring with it a severe punishment.

He feels the sword spinning over his head. He is not convinced of his innocence.

He started behaving politically in a very wild way, to the extent that he said, "I will change the law. I will select the judges. I will disrupt the investigations. I will start sabotaging law enforcement agents."

This conduct was directed against the government. It had already become a crime.

Some will say, "But look, all in all, he wants to run the country and deal with the important issues, and what we're dealing with now is the champagne, the cigars, the media... come on."

All this is happening after he had already succeeded, in fact, in stopping the investigations of all the issues that have serious suspicions against him. First and foremost the suspicion about security offenses related to Case 3000 and the submarines. That story has been removed from him but has yet to be eliminated. There is a deep suspicion that he had already hurt our national security by doing what he did.

What were the reasons? Economic?

Arad: Yes. He was involved in a conflict of interest situation that he should not have been involved in. He had people who took care of this conflict of interest. They pulled strings and stirred the mess of that porridge. It turned out that his associates raked in a lot of money in situations that were prohibited by law, and he got involved in many actions that in themselves were illegal.

Do you believe that the Submarine Affair presents real suspicions?

Arad: There is currently a trial against six or seven people accused of offenses related to the submarines, offenses of bribery, money laundering, fraud, breach of trust, all these things. A list of names. This means the crimes were committed. But the prime minister was excluded from it. From the beginning, it was said that he was exempt. He was not investigated. It's not that he was investigated and found to have had no involvement. He was excused in advance. It was an unusual act. But the crimes were committed by others. Now, among the others involved in it, two-thirds were his associates. One of them is his lawyer, another is a man he appointed as the head of Malal [the Hebrew acronym for Prime Minister's Office for Administration and Organization.]. Another associate is a former minister and a friend, and another is the head of his bureau. All these people come from his immediate circle.

But the most prominent among them are his family members, especially people with extreme and clear conflicts of interest.

Second, these people received kickbacks. Some of the kickbacks were given to his lawyer and his own family.

Third, his behavior in several areas related to government activities was an anomaly.

The security establishment, for example, revolted. Why was he personally interfering in government contracts?

The submarine contracts?

Arad: The surface ships. Why did he intervene? You intervene and make decisions that show irregularities. It gives off a bad smell, a stench that points to foreign considerations mixed in this affair.

Another thing: there are other family members around him, who also accepted kickbacks. His uncle, Milikowski, happened to be connected to the same companies. And he gave false statements to the state auditor.

In short, there is a lot of material about these issues.

Do you think they will get to him?

Arad: The irregularities took place under his command and by his people. But note that there are also some significant affidavits about this story. When someone like Ehud Barak or Bogi Ya'alon talks about these issues they know what they are talking about. Both are former chiefs of the general staff and former defense ministers, and both served with the prime minister in the same governments. One of them was also a former prime minister. They know more about what is going on and they are top-notch. Both say that on the subject of the submarines sold to Egypt, his behavior reached the point of near treason. These people know the meaning of these events. They don't speak for the sake of throwing words into the wind. What do they mean by what they say? What do they testify to?

When there are 20 or 30 senior officials from the intelligence establishment, Mossad heads, chiefs-of-staff, generals, and directors general of the Ministry of Defense, who say the same thing: "Netanyahu is a threat to the security of the country!" Does it mean all these people don't know what national security means?

These people contributed to and worked for national security, some of them have done far more than Netanyahu.

From where did this consensus come? After all, all of them justify what they say. It casts a heavy shadow over Netanyahu.

Plus, everything escalated at the beginning of 23', when thanks to his victory in the elections he received 64 mandates. Strengthened by this mandate, he went on the offensive with the so-called 'The judicial coup'. That fast (attempt) to overhaul all kinds of legislation serves the interests of his coalition members and reflects on his trial. This act is so accelerated, expedited, and changes the world order in the country that it has become almost a judicial coup.

Two such heavy blows to the country...

Now at stake are not only Case 1000 and Case 2000. These two events caused an urgency to change the country and its character which is contrary to its values in such a shocking and brutal manner. And then, the unbearable lightness of the policy errors, which caused October 7...

Above all, the sin of the Gaza campaign. His considerations are not about how to bring about the most economical and effective victory or the well-being of the people, but how to maintain the balance so things will play for his benefit—they are about how the war will reflect on him, and how it will benefit his people.

These are, if you will, serious security violations, which add to everything that happened before.

I don't think there is anyone in the history of Israel who carries such a heavy burden of responsibility.

What is your position on what we know as facts about the continuous transfer of funds to our enemies, to Hamas, in cash and over a long period, through the Prime Minister's Office? On top of it, the documents published about the instructions given to Qatar to transfer 65 million dollars to him personally or for the benefit of the Likud. From what you know about standard operating procedures, is this something you consider part of the game?

Arad: Look, first of all, the story of greed and the weight that money and its accumulation affect different people is well known. We know how much it makes people do what they do. We know that there are people for whom money considerations are super important. We know that people are willing to break the law for money. So this is already worse...

Are you taking into account that these are the rules of the game?

Arad: No. They are not the rules of the game. Some leaders do not accept bribes. But you can see that in modern life, especially in democracies, politicians need money to be elected, and some also want a good life. And then you see, Berlusconi accepted it, Sarkozy accepted it, you see it everywhere.

When you worked with Bibi, did you face situations where you advised him to be careful?

Arad: I told Bibi, as a sweeping suggestion, a hundred times: "Obey the law! Be on the right side of the law! Take the high moral ground on every issue. It is worth abiding by the law, not because it is an ethical thing, but because it is worthwhile. Why? Because if you break the law you will be caught. And then when you get

caught you'll regret it. So why don't you see the law as your right-side linesman and do everything by the law and nothing that is forbidden?'

Why did you need to tell him that? What were the situations in which...

Arad: Because of the way he runs the country. A lot of things like that...

But in what situations did you talk to him about obeying the law?

Arad: This arose mainly due to the activities of Molcho and Shimron. These two had a conflict of interest because they own private businesses and have clients, and at the same time, they do whatever they want, which can be subject to some conflict of interest agreement, which they also often ignore. On the other hand, they are involved in government activities, where they are supposed to work under the Civil Service Regulations and the authority of the law, but disregard them as well.

[Isaac Molcho and David Shimron are lawyers who were closely associated with Netanyahu and became central figures in the "submarine affair" a.k.a. "Case 3000." This case involved allegations of corruption and bribery related to the submarines and other naval ships purchases from the German company Thyssenkrupp. David Shimron is Netanyahu's cousin and personal attorney. He was more directly implicated in the "submarine affair." He was suspected of using his close connections to Netanyahu to influence decisions to favor Thyssenkrupp, allegedly receiving substantial fees for his services. g.b.]

And this double-edged situation was wrong in my eyes...

Did you warn him to be careful in his relationships with the lawyers?

Arad: Look, Eliakim Rubinstein, when he was the Government Secretary demanded from Gilad Sher and later it was also demanded from Dobi Weisglass to make a decision. [Gilad Sher served as Chief of Staff and Policy Coordinator to Prime Minister Ehud Barak from 1999 to 2001. He played a significant role in peace negotiations at the Camp David Summit and the Taba talks with the Palestinian Authority. Dov Weisglass, a lawyer and businessman, was a close confidant and advisor to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. As Chief of Staff, he helped to shape and implement Sharon's policies. g.b.]

He said, "You are lawyers. Do you want to be messengers or something like that? You have to resign from your law firm and sell your share! You are either here or there. You can't keep one foot here and one foot there. This situation can be exploited by influence peddlers that might lead to problematic developments, so you have to cut the cord. It is either or but not both."

I told the Prime Minister, "You have to follow all the laws, all the different laws!"

What was his response?

Arad: He called me "A Boy Scout" (naive). He didn't understand my naïveté, my stupidity because he doesn't see things that way. The law for him is 'So what?'

For him, the law did not descend from Mount Sinai. They were created by people like him.

And regarding the law, Shimron told Bibi, "The Malal law is a bad law."

I asked him, "What do you mean by a bad law? In my opinion, the income tax law is bad. So what? Does this mean I can stop paying taxes now because I think it's a bad law? As long as there is a law, you have to work according to the law. You don't like it? Try to change it, if you have a way to do it. But don't break the law."

The Talmud offers a revolutionary approach that states that you don't appoint a public servant who has no skeletons in his closet. So looking at it from the opposite perspective, when the leader has skeletons in his closet that might be exposed, then he will be careful, and he will be more humble. He might even abide by the law. I guess this idea didn't prove itself here.

Arad: No, it didn't. Look, it's witty. Maybe it has a kernel of cleverness or something, but in reality, it's not what you want. If it were correct, then let's look for a person with a beautiful closet full of skeletons and elect him.

We want there to be no closet full of skeletons. We prefer no skeletons at all, which we discovered were hidden there all the time. People knew about them. The skeletons reappear every once in a while because recidivism is real [the tendency of a convicted criminal to commit new offenses after release from incarceration or after completion of a punishment].

Then you regret it because it turns out that the writing was on the wall. When people do these things repeatedly, the shock is hard to take.

Therefore, today in Israel, we have to do two things. First, impose term limits even though it's not a silver bullet. We must prevent this phenomenon of endless presence (of a politician like Bibi on the public stage). And second, establish the rules of entry into government.

Should we use the filters you talked about?

Arad: Yes. From my experience in the Mossad, I noticed at least two or three times people who behaved with a certain dishonesty. I'll give you a simple example: an employee submits a vacation report but declares it a sick day so his vacation days will not be deducted. We do it sometimes.

When I was in charge of someone who did that, I told him, you can't do that, you're making me an accomplice. And that is dishonesty.

The man was indignant, but finally reported it as vacation days. And I did not take any disciplinary action against him.

Five years later he cheated on something more serious. When a man is dishonest he would do it again. So, it's best to deal with the problem at the start when you see the symptoms.

We started talking about leadership and we arrived at this point. Can you tell me in simple words, are we in grave danger arising from the quality of the current leadership?

Arad: Today, the situation is the total of all the failures, blunders, and shortcomings we have accumulated here. It is not because of one person or one phenomenon. It is the sum of everything.

Today I spoke to one of Israel's science giants, who was at the top of the scientific establishment. He is a true giant. We talked about the state of the universities in Israel. The average American has many options to choose from. He can go to one of the ten best universities in the world. They are right there. We don't have more than one university in Israel that may be among the best one hundred universities in the world.

We talked earlier about Alexander the Great, whom Aristotle came to teach from the Athenian Academy. We don't have that.

A French student can choose a university that is among the 20 best in the world. A British student has five universities in England that are among the 20 best in the world.

If this is the case, how are we going to survive?

Arad: Our situation is not good. Our security was not in our pocket, but because of the continuous neglect and the cumulative result of falling behind, and when we presume that our strength lies in our qualitative superiority, that which is acquired in universities and scientific successes and that by relying on them, we compensate for the reality that we have no territory or population...

It's all just talking...

Arad: But here we are falling behind. We will pay a heavy price and it will get worse because now they impose boycotts on us. It is an existential threat. These are serious failures, caused by our conduct. We could have been spared. It makes no

difference that some of it is driven by haters, by unfairness. The world is not fair. You have to function within reality.

And we are still losing height all the time and parts of the airplane are slowly breaking down. That doesn't mean we'll hit the ground and crash. What we need to do is change the composition of the government. Part of the disaster is the quality of the leadership. We need to enact major reforms in the systems that failed us. We have to rebuild, repair, and restore the system.

Do you think it can be done?

Arad: I don't know. If it is not done, then expect greater disasters. If it is done, then it will be possible to halt them.

We also have to deal with some of the problems that come to us from the outside. Our enemies are not waiting. They present us with serious challenges and we need to be as strong as possible to withstand them.

To be as strong as possible, we need to gather our strength. We need to be more efficient. We should not drain our strength.

If we do everything that needs to be done, and can be done—these are not requirements we have failed to fulfill. In our history, we have lived through moments of exaltation and overcoming difficulties. If we do that, then I'm optimistic.

But if your client as you know him won't let it happen, do you think we'll survive another three years?

Arad: We might survive until the next elections. Sometimes you can survive a few heart attacks, but not too many (laughs). I want to believe the moment of truth will arrive soon and we will move to the phase of putting on the breaks and starting to soar, as we change and fix the system. Currently, we don't have leaders on the political stage whose stature and experience indicate an ability to bring about such organizational and policy changes.

Also in the opposition?

Arad: Especially in the opposition...

See, Athens reached her peak under Pericles in about 40-45 BC. Thirty years later it was destroyed. The time that passed from peak to bottom was thirty years. Why do you think Israel should survive longer?

What caused Athen's downfall was that Sparta went to war against her and burned her to the ground. But in the middle of the war, there was an epidemic. The epidemic that devastated Athens was such that a third of the population died, including the

children of Pericles and Pericles himself. But it was not that contagious. The Spartans camped outside beyond the walls, and nothing happened to them. Thucydides described the behavior of the Athenians during the months that the disease was active. How do you think they behaved?

They said, "Eat and drink because tomorrow we die."

Like the Germans did when the Red Army was at the gates of Berlin...

Arad: The city was filled with entertainment, orgies; there was a joyful atmosphere. They went to restaurants, ate without restraint, and slept around without restraint. There were two reasons. First, eat and drink, for the future is uncertain. Secondly, there were no moral restraints. There was no longer a reputation to be destroyed, so why should I care? So I do whatever I want. There was an atmosphere of total abandon.

That's also what's happening here now. People are going to restaurants like crazy. It's part of the joyous behavior; let's have fun because soon we return to our old life.

But there was one amazing thing happening in Athens. During that time, some doctors tried to treat the patients. Now every doctor who treated a patient knew he would die, they knew they were infected, and yet they treated them. Why did they treat them? The patients were sentenced to death, so why treat them? Again, you will die, so why treat them?

The dedication of the doctors...

Read this section of The Plague in Athens.

Yes, happily

Don't forget who the three horsemen of the apocalypse are; The three greatest causes of death in history are the sword (war), famine, and pestilence.

We have epidemics now, they are getting worse and will get even worse than that. There is hunger in Venezuela, in Egypt, in Africa, lots of hunger. God bless, there are more and more wars...

Can you say that everything is going as usual?

No, it's getting much worse.

In cycles, right?

Arad: No, it's getting worse, not in cycles...

Will there be more wars than in the past?

Arad: No, but there will be wars of total annihilation. The world will end at enormous speed. Today, the mythological clock that gauges the danger of nuclear war is the closest it has ever been to midnight, simply because there are so many nuclear-weapon states. That's why it is important to have leaders who are also a little bit sane.

The Saudis want permission to maintain a nuclear infrastructure like Iran's in exchange for a regional agreement, and Israel is going to agree. If Iran goes nuclear, then the Saudis will go nuclear, because they are attaching themselves to Iran. So we will go nuclear. Now there are already three nuclear countries (in the Middle East), Turkey will also do it, and so will Egypt. Five nuclear states within 5-7 years. We are still the same nations here with the same known sensitivities, with the composure we know of the neighborhood, and they are all nuclear states.

What we call good news...

Arad: It's right here, behind the curve in the road waiting for those who will come after Bibi.

The question is, can this process be stopped?

Arad: Yes, it will be possible to stop it, if, for example, we reach a demilitarization agreement for the entire region and accept the supervision of the superpowers and that Israel will also demilitarize. Peres once said he was ready for it.

Who will remove the dust from your eyes, Shimon?

Arad: Peres is capable. He has highs and downs and here's a good proverb... He said he was ready to join the Arab League...

This was chapter 83 of Sacred Cows: "Bibi's narcissism has become malignant. Great leaders must have the ability to empathize" – A lesson on leadership and the leader with the National Security Advisor of the Prime Minister."

As always, we would be happy to receive help for this project, which is done entirely on a volunteer basis; In English translation, video editing, or financial donation. Details in "Help and Donation" on the Sacred Cows website. See you in the next chapters.