

March 28, 1977 - Lubavitch
Award Reception hosted by
Senator Humphrey and
Tip O'Neill
Washington, D. C.

Dear friends, this is a beautiful occasion. You've had more Members of Congress come here and join in this celebration ^{the} than most of/time we're able to get on the floor of the Senate.

I want to be very parochial, if I may say it, very limited for a moment in my acknowledgment, that I am very grateful to my friends of the Lubavitch movement in Minnnesota.

We feel that we have one of the stronger Lubavitch/^{movements}in our State. (I have to tell you, four Rabbis told me to say that on the way coming in here).

Let me also be very personal with you for a moment. You have treated me with such friendship and warmth that I can only say to you in the most humble and yet sincere terms, my personal thanks. I know that in many of your synagogues you have prayed for my health and my recovery. I've received not only your messages, but I've received the blessings of God Almighty, because I know of your intercession on my behalf. (Applause)

I'm very sincere when I tell you of my thanks because when you go through an ordeal such as I've experienced, it takes more than just the surgeon and the medical doctors. It does take great faith and it takes the prayers of many dear and wonderful friends. And in this room are some of the dearest friends of my private and public life, right here amongst you.

I thought the program for this evening's celebration was simply beautiful, and I commend those who made it possible. From a politically important view, one of the most important

name is the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Thomas O'Neill, who has joined me as co-chairman of this occasion.

Might I add very quickly that he is a very devoted friend and one on whom you can rely. And he is without a doubt one of the most influential and powerful figures within the government of the United States. Well I consider it an honor to share this evening with him as co-chairman and I consider it a very rare honor to have the chance to be with you. We had our picture taken, and you know that flatters a man in public life when you come and say can I have my picture taken -- I'll have to go home to Mrs. Humphrey and have her bring me down to size after all this!

This occasion is not only a celebration, which within itself would be a very worthy enterprise, but I say that because when you celebrate the 75th birthday of one of the greatest spiritual leaders in the world, and one who has given true inspiration to so many and is the spokesman and the leader of the great international spiritual movement, that within itself is every reason for a happy and joyous occasion. Birthday parties ought to always be happy occasions. But this particular birthday occasion goes beyond what we call the normal birthday party.

You have made it a special occasion by coming to many of us who are Members of Congress and expressing your good will, and I think it's fair to say, your thanks, in these beautiful citations that you have presented to so many of us here tonight. I know I speak for all of them when I say thank-you and express our gratitude. We really, truly appreciate this acknowledgment.

But this occasion is a moment and the time for us to think through some other things. For example, the Lubavitch movement has really been the driving force for the spiritual movement and the spiritual revitalization of Judaism throughout the world, not only throughout the United States.

This movement has established 50 wonderful centers, as I recall, in I believe 35 states throughout America. And today and tonight there are representatives from these states here.

The Lubavitch movement has been in the forefront of the prevention of and the concern for those who today suffer oppression wherever they may be in the world. You've been in the forefront.

And the President of the United States has spoken out for those people of Jewish faith that are in the Soviet Union that want nothing more than to have the right to practice their faith, to have the right to family union, to have the right to freedom of movement. Very simple things.

I've often thought that this mighty super power that we call the Soviet Union reveals an incredible weakness when it's afraid to have a religious document come to people of Jewish faith. . . afraid to let them in the country! I don't think that tells me that they're a super power. (Applause)

Might I just quickly add that those of us that take our stand, whatever our religious faith, whatever our political persuasion, those of us who take our stand for human rights are taking the stand that is as old as the prophets of Israel, that's as old as that famous old prophet Amos, who was one of my favorites, of Isaiah, King Solomon and David.

It's as old as the message of Moses. And yet it is as fresh and as new as the very day that we have for ourselves as of this moment.

The United States of America, if it means anything to the world, it means freedom. As I had the privilege of saying recently at one of our Senate hearings, human rights is the expression of the soul of America. And I want this blessed country of ours to be known not only for its wealth, for its power, but I want it to be known for something that's much more fundamentally important -- our concern for the lives of people, plain ordinary people, our willingness to make sacrifices for a meaningful life, and a dedication to human dignity and human liberty called human rights. (Applause)

How I wish that I could share these moments tonight with Rabbi Sheerson (?) because he's one of the great scholars of our time. Jerry Schestak (?) was giving me some material, he said, Hubert, do you really want to know about this wonderful, distinguished, great spiritual leader? And I said I'd like to know more than I do. And when I was looking through what was published and made available to us, it is a remarkable story of a truly God-sent man.

He's without a doubt one of the most scholarly, profound, spiritual leaders that has graced this country of ours or, indeed, that has graced any part of the world. And/^{who,} as I said in the beginning, it's to have the chance just to share in a moment of rejoicing for the fact of his life, for the marvelous inspiration that he has given to the people of the Jewish faith all over the world, not only to the people of the Jewish faith, and I'm

not of the Jewish faith, but I'm inspired by the knowledge of this man. Because all of us know there are certain eternal principles and values, and one of them is the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man which binds us all together.

Now we have some people here that ought to talk to you, and I see that one of my closest friends has just come into the room again, he was here earlier and he had to go over to another meeting -- he's one of the busiest men on Capitol Hill. And I don't know how we're supposed to work this, Rabbi Schetak, (?) but you said I should just take charge for a while, is that right?

And I want you to hear from this good man. We've worked together in so many projects, and I've often said that there's no man in the Senate of the United States that's more brilliant, that's more dedicated, and that does more for this country day in and day out, and the very distinguished and senior Senator from the State of New York. And I'm going to call on Senator Javits to say a few words to you.

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