

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY III

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It is an honor for me to be with you tonight to accept this award honoring my father. As you are so well aware, my father and the Jewish community of this nation had a unique "love affair" -- a love affair borne out of the numerous struggles for human rights in this country and the fidelity to that citadel of democracy in the Middle East -- the State of Israel.

In accepting this honor, I want to address the concerns of my father, concerns which I share very deeply. My understanding and appreciation for these values certainly were nurtured by my close association with my father. But they were also nurtured by my own personal experiences.

I can recall visiting the Middle East with my father in 1975. I had the opportunity to meet and visit with a number of Israelis. We traveled to the Sinai, the Golan heights. We held numerous discussions with Israeli leaders.

And there was the meeting with Golda Meir -- that woman who personifies the intellect, the humanity, the courage and the spirit which epitomize one of the most exciting developments of this century -- the establishment of the modern state of Israel.

It was this opportunity to be with my father and travel through Israel that helped me understand the depth of his conviction that, as he so often said, and I quote:

"I have absolutely no disagreement with the goal of securing the trust and friendship of the Arab world. In fact, I believe it to be an imperative. But while we are pursuing this policy, we should not forget that Israel, for the United States, cannot be regarded as just another nation among many nations in the Middle East.

"We must declare without embarrassment and without apology that Israel has earned a special relationship with America.

"The Arab world must understand that if it desires better relations with the United States, it must accept our good relations with Israel. No Administration should ever mislead any Arab leader to believe otherwise."

And there are profound reasons why my father expressed this fundamental commitment. There is a message in the thousands of years of struggle and survival of the Jewish people, as symbolized in the struggle of the State of Israel.

There is a message in the martyrdom and nameless victims of this struggle.

And the message is that while people may be oppressed, the urge for freedom will persist undiminished.

This is the story of Israel, and it is also the story of the commitment of the United States to the survival of an independent and secure Jewish state in the Middle East.

Except for longstanding obligations to NATO and Japan, few aspects of American foreign policy have been as firm and as longlasting as our commitment to support an independent and secure Israel.

Our policy has been predicated upon historical, moral, strategic and political grounds.

Israel's right to exist as a free and independent state is not negotiable.

It is necessary for Americans to understand and appreciate Israel's position and her reluctance to give up conquered territories without effective guarantees.

Israelis remember all too well what happened after the Sinai campaign of 1956. They withdrew from the Suez Canal and all territory conquered at that time, and they trusted the paper guarantees they were given.

A United Nations force was stationed in Sinai at Sharm El-Sheikh. But all it took was one word from Egyptian President Nasser, and the U.N. personnel were removed. And we all recall only too well the events of the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

There are those who warn that the U.S. is becoming to heavily tied to Israel, both economically and militarily.

Yet, the goal of the United States is to deter wars from occurring, or to minimize adverse consequences to the U.S. if they do occur.

Our military and economic aid to Israel is fully in the American interest. Unless a credible balance of power is maintained in the Middle East, there can be no genuine progress in efforts to achieve a permanent peace there.

But it has not been just dollars and military equipment from America which has helped Israel remain a viable, independent nation.

It has taken more than money to make a desert bloom with agricultural production.

And it is taking more than money to build a viable economy which takes care of all of its citizens with decency and dignity.

Yes, there is a lesson for America in the enduring struggle of that small Jewish democracy.

It is a lesson that says a people and a nation are made strong because they believe in themselves -- they believe in their God -- and they believe in the fundamental rightness of their existence.

This is nation building.

Israel's strength today, beyond arms -- beyond its tanks and planes -- is found in its people. As the great prophet Zachariah proclaimed: "Not with strength and not with armed might, but with spirit will you prevail, saith the Lord God."

The Jewish people brought to the New World their age-old struggle to be free. It is here in America that the memories of tyranny have kept alive the vigilance of the Jewish people to the threats against freedom.

And it is here in America that the Jewish concept of social and economic justice as the cornerstone of freedom was joined with the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian ideals of equality. Together they form a potent force -- a force capable of guaranteeing that we remain a free, vibrant, open society in which all men and women can make the most of their God-given talent.

What does all this mean in the context of U.S.-Israeli relationships? It means there is more at stake than only military or security considerations.

The Jews of the world have made indispensable contributions to the humanity, freedom and civilization of mankind. These values are inherent in the state of Israel. If we allowed Israel to go under, it would mean the destruction of our own values and goals as a nation. For it is our own spiritual and moral ties to Israel which form the underpinning of our special relationship with that country.

These are the values of my father. These are the values I share and understand.

Again, I deeply appreciate being here with you tonight. I know I speak for my entire family when I say how grateful we are for this honor you bestowed upon the memory of a very, very special person -- my father.

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