



## Max M. Kampelman Papers

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REMARKS BY MAX M. KAMPELMAN  
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF GREATER WASHINGTON  
AWARD FOR CIVIC ACHIEVEMENT

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In the words of that immortal master of English rhetoric, Mr. Samuel Goldwyn, I have a few words to say before I begin to speak.

I want to thank Bob Kogod very much for that gracious and kind introduction. I enjoyed every one of its lovely exaggerations. I do, however, recall that one of our ancient Rabbis reminded us that as we approach the doors of heaven for entry, we will be judged not so much by the awards we bestow on one another, but by the scars we carry as a result of the pursuit of our religious values. By that standard, ladies and gentlemen, I fall short. My public service has brought me many satisfactions.

Receiving any award, particularly a distinguished award from the Jewish Community Center, calls for the expression of deep humility. I am aware, however, that it is difficult in the Jewish tradition to be humble. Indeed, it takes a kind of arrogance for us to proclaim humility!

The tale is told of a *Kol Nidre* night. The rabbi, overwhelmed by the spirit of the service, and overcome by humility, beat his chest and loudly proclaimed: "Oh Lord, I stand humbly before Thee. Forgive me, for I am nothing, I am nothing!" The Cantor, deeply affected by the Rabbi's intense piety, stood up and

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repeated in a chant: "Oh Lord, I too am humble, I am nothing, I am nothing." The President of the congregation, who shared the *Bimah*, was similarly moved, and loudly proclaimed: "I am nothing, I am nothing."

Caught up in the fervor, the lowly sexton, the *Shamus*, joined in, shouting: "Oh Lord, I too am nothing, I am nothing." Whereupon, the Cantor nudged the Rabbi and angrily whispered: "Look who thinks he's a nothing!"

It is appropriate in these times of anxiety about Israel and the obvious growing anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere that we remind ourselves, as American Jews who understand the vital importance of "community," of our own role and responsibilities as members of the world Jewish community.

In 1654, the first Jewish settlers, led by Asser Levy, arrived on these shores from South America. There were 23 of them, and they landed in New Amsterdam. They were not welcome. Governor Peter Stuyvesant opposed giving them their religious freedom, saying: "If we grant liberties to the Jews, we will have to grant them also to the Lutherans and the Papists." In time, they gained those liberties, and after appealing to the governing authorities in the Netherlands, they also later gained the right to join the militia.

Michael Novak, The distinguished Catholic theologian and historian, has recently published a book, *On Two Wings*, a profound analysis of the ideals and values of our founding fathers which highlights the contribution of Judaism and the Old Testament to the birth of our Nation. He writes:

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“American Christians selected their recent arguments about political life from . . . the Jewish Testament . . . Early American Protestants loved the stories of the Jewish Testament, and from them took many names for their children. The idiom of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was the religious *lingua Franca* for the founding generations . . . The language of Judaism came to be the central language of the American metaphysics.”

The guiding principle which has characterized the Jewish presence in America has been the letter of George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island: “... Happily, the government of the United States... gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance... may... everyone... sit in safety under his own vine... and there shall be none to make him afraid.”

Our second President, John Adams, in a letter to our third President, Thomas Jefferson, wrote: “I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize Man than any other nation... Fate has ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilization.” Four years before his death, in a codicil to his will, Adams bequeathed funds for the establishment of a school in which Hebrew was to be taught along with the classical languages.

As a design for the seal of the United States, Jefferson suggested: “A representation of the children of Israel in the wilderness”. In his Second Inaugural Address he referred to God’s American Israel.

This pattern of respect has been a steady one. In July 1862, at Abraham Lincoln’s initiative, Congress enacted legislation making it possible for Jews to be

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chaplains in the Army, a step which the Encyclopedia Judaica describes as “a major step in the Americanization of the Jewish religion.”

I have no hesitation in stating that in the 350 years of life in the United States, Jews have enjoyed an adventure in freedom and human dignity. We became an integral part of a society unlike any encountered in our previous history. In enjoying the diversity, freedom and democracy existing in the United States, and by actively becoming a contributing part of the society, Jews developed a unique romance with America. The frontier spirit was hospitable to new arrivals. The competitive spirit it encouraged through politics and economics made it particularly hospitable to newcomers to these shores, eager for an opportunity to live lives of dignity. Jews have learned through the years that wherever there has been a monopoly of power, whether private or government, the beneficiaries are likely to be selected arbitrarily rather than on merit or worth. With competition, it is merit and effort that count, equal opportunity.

In the United States today, more than 40% of all the Jews in the world live comfortably in two cultures, the Jewish and the Christian. Our Judaism has not been sacrificed. Hebrew schools and attendance in them have greatly increased in number. Jewish culture in the United States has soared to impressive heights; some of the greatest Jewish libraries in the world are here. The community is strong and affluent; the doors of public service are wide open to our co-religionists. All of this is protected by America's strength. This era in which we live may well be the golden age of Jewish history, probably greater than that enjoyed in Alexandria during the First Century, or the period in Spain under the Arabs from the 11th to the 14th Centuries.

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But challenges in life are always with us, and our faith teaches us that we dare not ignore them. I learned as a child in Hebrew school that there is in each of us that which is "good" -- the *yaitzer hatov* -- and that which is "evil" -- the *yaitzer hara*. Catholics identify it as "original sin." Freud understood this reality. The Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr called it "Children of Light and Children of Darkness." The study of the human being and the societies we create reflect this reality of conflict between these two ingredients of life. There is no other explanation for the Holocaust or the crimes of Stalinism. The process of religion -- indeed, the demands of our faith -- is to acknowledge and not be blind to this reality, identify it, and overcome it. Today, we note with disappointment that anti-semitism in Europe is again beginning to inject itself into our reality. It cannot and must not be ignored. It is reflected in Israel's continuing struggle for survival.

In a sense, one can understand the violence of words, hatred and terrorism coming out of the Arab world. That world is today, regrettably, an authoritarian one, controlled, in the main, by kingdoms and rulers who fear democracy and the presence of Israel, a democracy, in their midst. They frequently use Islam as a justification for their hate, much to the embarrassment of many traditional Muslim scholars. Their current commitment to support the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank is cynical and outrageous when you consider that for more than 50 years, they have refused to welcome and absorb those unfortunate people into their own societies and, instead, placed them and kept them in dismal refugee camps at a time when an equal number of displaced Jews evicted from Arab countries (600,000 or more) were fully integrated into Israeli culture and society. Their tool is Arafat, a long-time professional terrorist, who was evicted by the governments of Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan because they feared he could turn against them.

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We can understand and support the aspiration of Palestinian Arabs for statehood and dignity. We can understand the threatened Arab world, but how do we explain the growing anti-Semitism in Europe, which hits us in the face every time we read a newspaper?

The British magazine, *The Spectator*, recently wrote that anti-Semitism has become "respectable... at London dinner tables too frequently to discount." The magazine quotes a liberal member of the House of Lords saying: "The Jews have been asking for it and now, thank God, we can say what we think at last." *The New Statesman*, in its January 14 cover, showed a large Star of David with its bottom point driven into the center of the Union Jack, a picture the General Secretary of the Labor Party called "one of the most offensive images I have seen." It is reliably estimated that in England in 2001 there were more than 300 anti-Semitic episodes.

*The New York Times*, in a recent editorial, pointed to specific statements of hate in France by public officials; groups of Jews being beaten in Belgium, France, Berlin and Tunisia; a leading liberal Italian daily newspaper *La Stampa* depicting a baby Jesus looking up from a manger at an Israeli tank saying, "Don't tell me they want to kill me again!"; a Lutheran bishop in Denmark delivering a virulent sermon in a Copenhagen cathedral; members of the Norwegian Nobel committee publicly calling for the withdrawal of the peace prize given to Shimon Peres without any reference to the prize unwisely awarded to Arafat; the European Parliament voting to urge member governments to impose trade sanctions against Israel, but silent about the terrorism of the Palestinian Authority; and we know about the United Nations Conference Against Racism in South Africa, which the



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United States refused to attend, where that Conference was turned into a celebration of hatred and Israel's legitimacy came under repeated attack.

We have long known of Israel's problems at the United Nations, and we remember with shame the "Zionism is racism" resolution which our country was finally able to eliminate. But some of the poison, regrettably, remains. It is not only the 57 nations of the Islamic Conference which have legitimized suicide murders. At the recent meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, France, Belgium and four other European Union members specifically condoned "all available means" to establish a Palestinian state. They were made aware of its implications before they voted, and, aware of the suicide murderer killing 16 Israelis and injuring many others that same day, the U.N. General Assembly voted to condemn Israel and defeated efforts to include a condemnation of Arab terrorism. Instead of voting against the resolution, Europe simply abstained.

The United Nations, beginning in 1950, supervised and today supports 27 refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, plus 32 camps in Jordan and Lebanon. They assert that there are 4 million Palestinian Arab refugees, which we know includes many whose grandparents never saw Palestine. Jenin is one of those camps. More than 20 of the 50 suicide bombers since September 2000 came from Jenin. When Israeli troops entered the camp to destroy its instruments of terror, they found booby traps, bunkers, human shields, well armed troops, illegal arms, bomb factories, a rocket manufacturing center, mines, mortars, missiles and written evidence of Arafat's involvement in establishing and maintaining these strongholds of terrorism. Indeed, Arab Red Crescent ambulances were used to transport those instruments of destruction. How could such facilities exist in a United Nations-managed refugee camp? How could a refugee camp under U.N. auspices become a



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center for recruiting and training suicide bombers? Were these international officials unaware, which would reflect incompetence? Or did they simply turn a blind eye, which implicates them in the crime of terrorism?

The Secretary General of the United Nations, a man who has been a more responsible official than many of his predecessors, did not apparently seek answers to these questions. Instead, he called on Israel "to withdraw immediately" and declared erroneously that Israel has engaged in "illegal" activities. He made no reference to the PLO or the support it had received from Saudi Arabia which encourages homicide bombers by praising their "deeds of faith" and giving substantial sums of money to their families. (The Saudis recently announced they raised over \$92 million to support the Palestinian "martyrs," referring to the suicide murderers.) Similarly, Mary Robinson, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, describes Israel's attempts to protect itself as being "in total disregard of international human rights." If she has ever criticized Arafat, it was in a whisper.

Jenin was an eight-day, tragic battle in a war that the Palestinian Arabs started more than 18 months ago. They have publicly and repeatedly stated that they are at war. With no peaceful alternative available to them, Israel has had no choice but to join in battle. The world, stimulated by the press and Arab propaganda, called Jenin "a massacre." So did the United Nations' General Secretary. Secretary of State Colin Powell then publicly stated: "I have no evidence of mass graves. I see no evidence that would support a massacre took place." We have now learned that those killed, no more than about 50, were primarily Arab soldiers and that only a small portion of the camp was destroyed.

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Let us now look for a moment at Israel's border with Lebanon. Two years ago, Israel voluntarily withdrew its troops from southern Lebanon, troops whose presence had produced a quiet stability on that border. Israel withdrew its troops to a border designated as final by the U.N. This was challenged by Syrian sponsored Hezbollah, who disagreed with the border decision. They entered into the Israeli area and kidnapped three Israeli soldiers (including one Israeli Arab) and killed them. U.N. personnel videotaped the incident, and then hid the tape. When Israel asked to view the tape, a U.N. senior official criticized Israel for "questioning the good faith of senior U.N. officials." After eight months, they finally acknowledged possession of the tape, and it showed Hezbollah guerrillas crossing the U.N. certified border using cars with U.N. license plates.

Here we have a gross challenge by Hezbollah and its Syrian guardians, a direct challenge to U.N. authority. Is the U.N. investigating Hezbollah and Syria's challenge to its authority? No. Why this distortion? Could it be that it is because Syria has been elevated to the powerful U.N. Security Council while Israel is the only country in the world disqualified from membership? It is sad to see the United Nations develop into another victim of Arab terrorism.

My purpose this evening is not to fill you with anger or despair. It is, rather, to define the scope of our problem and our concerns in realistic terms. Having problems and concerns is regrettably part of our tradition. Those challenges characterized the lives of our forefathers. We will survive, prevail and continue to build and strengthen our values of human dignity and brotherhood.

This is why I support our government's decision to call for an international conference to deal with the Middle East and the problems arising out of Arab

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terrorism. This should follow a peace agreement. That conference, I urge, should deal with how we can integrate that area of the world, now a tinderbox, into a comprehensive movement toward the steady growth of human rights. The annual survey conducted by Freedom House, a group I have the honor of serving as Chairman Emeritus, tells us that a greater percentage of governments and people today live in democracies or near democracies than ever before in world history. That movement is contagious. Those who rule without popular consent, or those who would deny the inherent dignity of the human being, are on their way out in spite of their desperate efforts to survive and resist the movement of history. A proper international conference, under the guidance of the United States, could begin to fashion the framework necessary to bring such a vital movement to fruition. My friends, there is a force for good, and, I believe, it will prevail.

Democracy is the political expression of our religious values. It was the early Hebrew tribes who proclaimed there was only one God. If there is only one God, then we are all of us brothers and sisters to one another. The Talmud asks why did the Lord only create one man? The answer: so that all of us would have the same ancestor and not claim superiority, one over the other.

Our religious values will prevail and our efforts to extend and strengthen our political democracy will prevail. Technology has the means to bring the peoples of the world closer together. Communication is instantaneous throughout the globe. Science and its discoveries are increasingly available to all. Peoples who are today disenfranchised, humiliated, enslaved, deprived, hungry and uneducated are aware that neighbors living only hours away from them do not suffer from those deprivations. They will want better lives for themselves and their children. They

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will demand the dignity that democracy and the rule of law provide, and in time, I believe it will be theirs. That objective is that aim of the United States.

We whose religious values tell us that those aspirations belong to human beings have a duty to maintain, strengthen and expand those values. That is why the concept of "community" is so vital, whether it is a world community or a local community. If we want to be effective, we must act as a community and be loyal to that community. We have a responsibility as American citizens to participate actively in support of our government and our institutions. We have a responsibility as American Jews to participate actively in our own community as well. Looking at this community of Greater Washington, and at what Charles E. Smith and his family have done to strengthen this community, we must show our appreciation and pride in those accomplishments by doing more. What we are is God's gift to us. What we do is our gift to God.

Harry Golden once told the following story. When he was young, he once asked his father: "If you don't believe in God, why do you go to the synagogue so regularly?" His father answered: "Jews go to synagogues for all sorts of reasons. My friend Garfinkle, who is orthodox, goes to talk to God. I go to talk to Garfinkle."

Ladies and gentlemen, whatever your preferences, be active, be generous, do your bit, go talk to Garfinkle. He is waiting for you.

I close my remarks tonight by repeating the closing remarks of Dr. Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's National Security Advisor, in a moving speech on Remembrance Day. She in good Hebrew urged us all to remember the

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words of the Kaddish: "Oseh shalom beemronmahn, hoo ya'ase shalom aleinu  
v'alkohl Yisrael v'eemru. Amein."

Thank you.