



Max M. Kampelman Papers

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IT'S BETTER TO LIGHT A CANDLE

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Thank you. In the words of the immortal Samuel Goldwyn, I have a few words to say before I begin to speak. As I mentioned to you, I am reminded of my days 80 years ago as a child living in a tenement in the Bronx. My parents had a small blue can in our kitchen, into which we put our pennies. Over the years and in many Jewish homes and families throughout the world, those pennies became nickels, dimes, quarters and dollars, and those, in turn, combined to plant trees in Palestine in a successful effort to turn the desert into a land of milk and honey. Today, the Jewish National Fund works to bring water to feed those trees and the farms and to enrich the lives of the people of Israel. May the day soon appear when those blessings can be extended to our Arab cousins, who live next door but whose leaders have deprived them of the blessings of peace, political freedom and modern technology.

The theme of my talk this afternoon is that it is more effective to light a candle than it is to curse the darkness. And, yet, shades of darkness are gathering today and should not be ignored.

At the end of the Second World War, when the anti-Semitic brutalities were exposed, the universal assertion was “never again!” Yes, we were aware that during the prior 1800 years, Jews had been expelled from more than 80 countries and were frequent targets of hate and ridicule. But that was yesterday. We remembered that Jews had even been prohibited by the British to enter Palestine, the historic homes of the Jewish people, during the Holocaust. And today we have Israel.

It is difficult to believe that anti-Semitic violence has openly reappeared in every European country; that brazenly hostile cartoons and editorials are being published in leading European journals. This new fury of anti-Semitism has led one British journalist to conclude that it is now a socially acceptable bias to express over dinner in polite society. The vile “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” is being taught to children throughout the Arab Middle East and a 41-part television series of that false message of hate has been shown on official Egyptian television, even though Egypt has

a peace treaty with Israel and is heavily subsidized by the United States.

The European Union, furthermore, has financially supported the PLO to the tune of more than \$400 million, funds ostensibly used for schools and text books that teach hate and which are also used to provide terrorists with their instruments of murder.

The existence of Israel obviously contributes to this evolving avalanche of hate and bias. Public opinion polls in Europe show that 59% of their population believes Israel to be a greater threat to world peace than North Korea. Those polls also show that Israel and the United States are considered to be the greatest threats to world peace, obviously ignoring the fact that more than 60,000 Chechens have been killed by the Russians; there is rampant genocide in the Sudan; Chinese brutality against Tibetans and Muslims continues; and a disastrous killing spree spreads in Africa.

This brings me to the essence of the problem we face. There is a malaise in the immensely heavily populated Muslim world, particularly in the Arab Middle East, where radical Islam⁺ is heavily funded and widely preached. We are even finding evidence of that in our own country, where, for example, a South Florida professor was recently indicted for being head

of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Holy Land Foundation, a fund-raising organization for Hamas, a group that is openly dedicated to violence.

I am not a psychologist, a historian, or a theologian, but scholars tell us that there is a long-held feeling of persecution within the Muslim community probably dating back to the Crusades. The Seventh Century is looked upon by much of Islamic culture as a lost golden age. Radicals in Islam perceive a continuing war between Islam and the Cross, with which Jews are also identified. A romanticized past based upon a glorification of death is appealing, particularly to the young and underprivileged. In 1492, furthermore, the year Columbus discovered America; Christians recaptured Spain from the Muslims, who were virtually expelled from Europe and aim to return.

It is also, I suggest, relevant that Israel is a constant reminder of Arab failure. Israel's economy out-performs those of its four Arab neighbors combined. Israel has seven research universities, for example, while there isn't a single one in the Arab world. In avionics Israel surpasses even the major powers of Europe.

The political reality in the Arab world discourages internal debate and reality testing. Unbiased information in the Arab world, furthermore, is often rare. Our own Government, by eliminating USIA and closing many of our libraries overseas, is responsible for that failure. Modern technology and what we call "globalization," however, cannot be ignored and it potentially thoroughly undermines authoritarian power. The Internet is piercing the rigidity of China, as well as that of Israel's Arab neighbors. Information is readily available on radio and television, which reach the farthest areas of our globe.

I can well imagine the question "Why is Cairo infinitely poorer than Tel Aviv?" arising among many Arabs. Indeed, there are strong signs that such questions are being raised in the scientific, academic and clerical community of scholars in many Arab countries, and certainly by scholars now living in the West Bank, many of who are now invited and meet with colleagues in Israeli universities.

My purpose this afternoon is not to share my thoughts with you on how to resolve the Israel-Palestine problem. I have views of my own, and our government is already deeply involved in addressing this issue. It is

Important, however, to note that Israel's problem and potential solution to the problem, is an integral part of a broader challenge.

The information age, for example, has exposed massive corruption within Arafat's organization. This is bound to cloud and undermine his leadership. In February, for example, the French government announced that Arafat's wife had bank accounts at two banks in France which were receiving regular transfers of \$1.2 million from Switzerland, totaling over \$11 million. The European Union is, in that connection, reportedly investigating how its \$444 million in contributions to the PLO have been spent, given the growing evidence of corruption and sponsorship of terrorist activities. With these developments, I note for you that about 400 Palestinian activists recently signed a public letter of resignation from Arafat's Fatah faction, complaining of mismanagement and corruption.

This brings me to other relevant, constructive developments that you may not have read or heard about through our crisis-oriented media:

In January of this year, the government of Yemen initiated a conference in Sana with participants from 52 countries to discuss democracy

and human rights in Arab and surrounding countries. After much preparation, their two-day meeting produced 12 principles reaffirming a commitment to elections, the rule of law under an independent judiciary, rights of women, separation of powers, and a free media. Their views on Palestinian issues were, regrettably, as expected, but they did agree to establish an Arab Democratic Dialogue Forum to promote a dialogue for the promotion of the democracy they seek in Palestine.

It is obvious that Arabs living in democratic Israel enjoy greater economic and political dignity than their relatives living next door under the rule of Arafat and his corrupt leadership, even though – even in Israel – they are not always treated with the same equality demanded for all citizens in a democracy.

Moderate Muslims are attracted by modern democratic social, political and economic principles. Much of this effort to harmonize their religion with our modern emphasis on human rights is present in the growing American Muslim community. But it is beginning to go further. It is not only present in the Yemen meeting to which I referred. In recent months, a significant group of Saudi intellectuals have also issued a

constructive message of principles, including democratic ones, which they sent to colleagues in our country in an effort to be collegial. The governments of Bahrain and Qatar have also held officially sponsored conferences on democracy, to which they have invited American human rights activists for study and exchanges.

I do not want to exaggerate this positive and hopeful development, but it is real. President Bush's leadership has made its mark -- and I speak as a Democrat who did not vote for him in 2000. In response to the spread of anti-Semitism in Europe, our government persuaded the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to hold serious international talks about how best to deal with the growing anti-Semitic poison. Last year, our representative at that meeting was Rudolf Giuliani; this year, President Bush appointed Ed Koch. They have both reported valuable constructive talks and responses. European governments have been participating actively and taking productive steps to deal with this disgrace.

In an effort to respond to our government's intense international pressure for democracy, as well as our friendship with Israel, the heads of Arab governments have been increasingly identifying themselves verbally

with the language of democracy. This week in Sea Island, Georgia, the leaders of the Group of 8 have met. The agenda includes an American proposal for extending democracy to the Mediterranean and the Middle East, an important proposal, in my opinion, which we hope and expect, will move the concept of democracy significantly forward. White House representatives have acknowledged to me the contribution to that proposal made by Freedom House, an organization which I now serve as Chairman Emeritus. Next week, in that connection, I have been invited to testify before a Congressional committee on how best to advance this objective further.

Today, a larger percentage of the human race lives in democracies and near-democracies than ever before in human history. The primary centers of resistance remain China, whose President, before assuming office, had publicly declared the virtues of democracy, and the Middle East, where some of its leaders at least verbally agree that democracy and human rights are what "ought" to be their aim. Let me here emphasize that our experience shows that the "ought" is a vital first step toward a later development aimed at conforming the "is" with the "ought" of the future. We are, I believe,

experiencing the active beginnings of a new forward push towards a higher form of civilization.

There is obviously resistance to those changes, which undermine the authority of those who today hold power in undemocratic societies. The existing power structures, particularly in the Middle East, are resisting inevitable change through the use of violence and terrorism. They will, with our help, fail.

Regrettably, we cannot depend on the United Nations to play a significant role in this evolving change for the better, whatever its other virtues may be. It is certainly not now equipped to resolve the Israel-Palestine crisis, given its lack of impartiality.

In 1947, the United Nations recognized Israel as a state and admitted it to membership. This was after years of extensive violence and terrorism between Jews, Arabs and the British. The area of the Palestinian Mandate was to be divided between Jews and Arabs into two states. The Arabs refused to accept Israel, declared war, and invaded, thus beginning the first of three wars against the Israeli state. The United Nations has at no time

criticized the Arabs, either for their military action contrary to the decision of the United Nations, or for subsequent terrorist activities against Israel, but they have condemned Israel on more than a few dozen occasions; and we remember their “Zionism is racism” resolution.

We also remember the applause in the General Assembly when Arafat spoke in uniform with two guns hanging from his belt. Israel remains the only state in the United Nations, out of 191 states, who cannot serve a term on the powerful Security Council, but North Korea and Iran can serve on the Council, and Syria was once elected its chair. The ineffective and insulting U.N. Human Rights Commission, which by rote annually attacks Israel, where Cuba and authoritarian Arab states prevail, and where Libya recently served as Chair – this sad charade is also in our minds.

I do not wish to conclude, in these times of anxiety about Israel and the obvious growing anti-Semitism in Europe and elsewhere, without reminding ourselves, as American Jews, of our good fortune as Americans.

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:

"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 *langue 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 chaplains in the Army, a step that 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.

We who live in America should be proud of the leadership provided by our government. Woodrow Wilson urged that American foreign policy be dedicated to the achievement of human and democratic values in the world. Our scholars now tell us that democracies do not wage wars against one another. Woodrow Wilson's message for democracy was the aspiration of Franklin Roosevelt and the essence of the Truman Doctrine. It was the moving rallying cry by President Kennedy during his inauguration. It was reflected in Ronald Reagan's "evil empire" speech, followed by his Westminster address of 1993. It is evident in the repeated calls of President Bush today. That message is strengthened by the inevitable globalization

that we have begun to experience. We, as Americans and Jews, have every reason to be proud of our country, however imperfect we may be and whatever our politics, particularly in this moment of crisis. May we soon learn that it is far better to light a candle than it is to curse the darkness?

Thank you.