

בס"ד

"United We Should Stand: Israel and American Jewry in the 21st Century"

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Good evening. It is an honor for me to address the Jewish Federation of Tulsa. I would like to thank your Federation for inviting me, for hosting me so gracefully, and for making this event possible.

I am very excited to be here, for many reasons. This is my first time in Tulsa. I have discovered a beautiful city, but also a welcoming, vibrant, and generous Jewish community that you can be proud of.

I am also excited because America occupies a special place in my heart. I was born and grew up in France, a country that owes its freedom to young American soldiers who risked and sacrificed their lives to liberate Europe from tyranny. My father-in-law escaped Nazi-occupied Europe as a child with his parents, and it is America that offered him a safe heaven and enabled him to become a free man and a proud Jew. And as an Israeli, I know what my country owes to American friendship and support.

But I am excited, mostly, because I strongly believe in the need for direct interactions, such as this one, between Israeli Jews and Diaspora Jews. Both Israel and American Jews face formidable challenges. I think that it is our duty to listen to each other and to be united in our common struggle for the future of the Jewish people.

A few weeks ago, the *Financial Times* published an op-ed by Tony Judt, a history professor at New York University. The author, who is technically Jewish and openly anti-Zionistic, wrote that European and American Jews should take their distance from Israel, and that a clear distinction should be established between Israelis and Jews. As a result, Israel would lose whatever is left of the international support it still enjoys, and Israelis would lose their motivation to fight on behalf of the Jewish people. Israel would have to capitulate, and then of course the Arab-Israeli conflict would be over.

The problem, according to Judt, is that Jews around the world feel that they are one people. Most Diaspora Jews identify with Israel, and most Israelis identify with world Jewry. But that is a problem to Judt only because he is personally opposed to the very existence of the State of Israel and because he wishes Israel would stop fighting a war which, according to him, is not worth fighting.

Judt is aware of the fact that the bedrock of our existence and survival as Jews is our unity and our shared belief in a common destiny. This is what he is trying to undermine. And this is what we must preserve at any cost.

I am here tonight to talk about what I think should be done by all of us to preserve this unity and this shared belief. And I want to do so by addressing, frankly and openly, the issues that cause misunderstandings and even rifts between Israel and the Diaspora, and by suggesting ways of addressing the major challenges that we face, collectively, as Jews.

The first issue is the Arab-Israeli conflict. This conflict is omnipresent in the news. It polarizes passions. When Israel was fighting for its independence in 1948 and for its survival in 1967, American Jews were unanimously supportive. Today, American Jews still support Israel, in the sense that they believe that Israel's right to exist is unquestionable and that Israel should enjoy peace and security. But they are divided about the scope and nature of that support.

Today's American Jews are generally more critical of and more opinionated about Israel than their parents used to be. Now, there is nothing wrong with being critical and opinionated of course. Quite the contrary: criticism is both necessary and healthy. But I do venture to say that some of the criticism leveled at Israel today, even among some American Jews and Jewish organizations, ignores some very important facts.

Many American Jews started feeling uncomfortable about Israel and its policies when pictures of the first Lebanon war in 1982 and of the first *Intifada* in 1987 were broadcast on television. From a vulnerable and heroic small nation fighting for its life, Israel was now perceived by many as a powerful regional bully preventing the advent of peace and denying the Palestinians their right to self-determination.

This discomfort was palpable not only in America but in the rest of the Diaspora and indeed in Israel itself. I am saying this from my own experience. In 1987 I was a high-school student in France and I remember getting quite annoyed at Israel from what I saw on the news and read in the newspaper.

When I went to college, I believed, like most of my classmates, that the true and ultimate reason for the absence of peace in the Middle East was Israel's alleged territorial greed, paranoia, and stubbornness. But it also happened to be that I started college right after Saddam Hussein had invaded Iraq. And Saddam did not venture to help the Palestinians achieve statehood alongside Israel. He was talking about "liberating" all of Palestine. Not only that, but he had many supporters and admirers in the West, including among my classmates, despite (or even maybe because of) his calls to destroy Israel.

This was an eye-opener to me. Even though France had joined the US-led coalition to liberate Kuwait, French public opinion was overwhelmingly favorable to Saddam Hussein. As a French Jew, I was torn between conflicting allegiances and I had the growing feeling that I would eventually have to decide what to favor between "French" and "Jew." I made that choice after an internship I did at the French Foreign Ministry as part of my studies. There, I saw from up-close that French multiculturalism was a myth and that there was no room for a Jew in the high civil service.

For the first time in my life, I felt like a stranger in my own country. On top of that, because military service was still mandatory at the time in France, I was drafted to the French army –even though that draft was pushed off because I was a student. I didn't want to serve in the French army. If I was going to be drafted, it would only be in the Israel Defense Forces.

This is how I decided to pick up and leave, right after I finished College, and to move to Israel. I was 22, knew no Hebrew, and only had a couple

of distant relatives in Israel. To my family and friends, my decision made no sense. I had just graduated from one of France's top universities, having majored in a field (French public law) that was useless in Israel. I was living in Paris' posh suburb, whose mayor at the time was Nicolas Sarkozy. But my decision was made, and I've never regretted it.

I moved to Israel at a historical moment. Shortly after my *aliyah*, Israel and the PLO signed an agreement that would have been unthinkable a few years before. I was supportive and enthusiastic. I felt privileged to have moved to Israel at the eve of what I thought at the time would be a new era of peace.

The reason I'm telling you this story, my story, is so that you understand what most Israelis feel today. We've tried and believed in a solution that did not work. And the reason why it did not work is not because of technicalities or because of mistakes that were made on the way. It did not work because the Palestinians have never accepted, do not accept, and in my opinion will never accept the two-state solution.

This is no ideological statement. It is a fact. You've probably heard of Benny Morris, the famous Israeli historian. Some twenty years ago, he published a detailed history of the Palestinian refugee problem. His declared purpose was to shed light on that historical event, but also to challenge Israel's traditional narrative. He even coined the term "new historian" to describe a phenomenon of a younger generation of Israeli scholars who were critical of the Zionist narrative.

Morris is also an expert on the Arab-Israeli conflict, having published in 1999 *Righteous Victims* –probably the most detailed history of that

conflict. Politically, Morris is (or at least was) what you would call a dove. He refused to serve his military reserve duties in the territories and was fully supportive of the land-for-peace and two-state solution paradigms.

Recently, Morris published a book called *One State, Two States*. In it, he explains and demonstrates that the two-state solution today is endorsed by most Israelis and continues to be rejected by most Palestinians –indeed by a growing number of Palestinians. And while he sees no viable alternative to the two-state solution, he also sees no realistic prospect of implementing it. It's a Catch 22.

The two-state solution was first proposed in 1937 during the British Mandate by the Peel Commission (at the time, it was called "Partition"). It was accepted by the Zionists and rejected by the Arabs. Ten years later, in 1947, the UN proposed its own partition plan. Again, the Zionists accepted the plan, and the Arabs rejected it. Between 1949 and 1967, when the West Bank was occupied by Jordan and Gaza was occupied by Egypt, the Arabs did not implement a two-state solution by establishing a Palestinian state. With the Camp David Agreements in 1979, the Palestinians were offered the opportunity to organize elections and establish their own government in the West Bank and in Gaza. They rejected the offer.

At the Camp David summit in July 2000, Israel accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state on 91% of the West Bank and the sharing of sovereignty over Jerusalem. The Palestinians said no. Five months later, President Clinton submitted his "parameters" to Israel and the Palestinians. The Palestinians got a better deal, with 96% of the West

Bank and sovereignty over the Temple Mount. Israel said yes, the Palestinians said no. In November 2008, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas to establish a Palestinian state on 100% of the West Bank, to share Jerusalem, and to accept a small number of Palestinian refugees to Israel. Mahmoud Abbas said no.

Not only that, but Abbas declared to *The Washington Post* in March 2009 that the gap is "huge" between what Olmert offered and what the Palestinians demand. What they demand is to invade Israel with millions of alleged descendants of the Arab refugees of the 1948 war. So alongside a Palestinian state from which each and every single Jew would be expelled, you would have a bi-national Jewish-Arab state with an Arab majority. That is not a two-state solution.

Today, Abbas refuses to negotiate with Israel, despite Israel's gestures (such as the removal of checkpoints and the settlement freeze in the West Bank). He knows that in any negotiation and peace proposal, the Palestinian bluff would be called again. Even if he was willing to sign an agreement, which he is not, such an agreement would be meaningless. Palestinian society and politics today are dominated by Hamas, a radical terrorist organization that calls for the destruction of Israel and for the world domination of Islam. Hamas won the Palestinian elections in 2006, and it would win even more votes if elections were held today (which they are not because Abbas, the head of the undemocratic Palestinian Authority, is preventing elections from taking place). With a Hamas-dominated Palestinian polity, an agreement signed with the virtual Palestinian Authority would be completely meaningless.

I am explaining this to you, because when I hear certain Jewish organizations in the United States, especially a new one which I will not mention by name, I wonder if we live on the same planet. So let me say it again clearly. It is the Palestinians, not Israel, who prevented in the past and who are preventing today the implementation of the two-state solution. They have rejected that solution six times: in 1937, in 1947, in 1979, in July 2000, in December 2000, and in 2008. And things are only getting worse because of the steady radicalization and islamization of Palestinian society. In June 2009, Israel's Prime Minister confirmed his country's commitment to the two-state solution. The Palestinians' answer was that they will never recognize Israel as a Jewish state, meaning that as long as Israel has a Jewish majority and is the country of a sovereign Jewish people, the Palestinians will continue to fight it.

So saying that the US should push Israel into accepting the two-state solution is simply absurd. American Jews have nothing to be embarrassed about when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel is on record for having accepted many times a peaceful and honorable solution. It even proved to the world that it was willing and able to uproot settlements to implement a two-state solution. In 2005, Israel uprooted thousands of Jewish families from the Gaza Strip and from the West Bank. But instead of seeing this painful move as a gesture of goodwill, the Palestinians saw it as a sign of weakness. And instead of building an economy in the Gaza Strip, they turned this territory into a terrorist base, launching thousands of rockets directed at Israeli civilian targets.

With the prospect of a nuclear Iran and of a possible Western humiliation in Afghanistan, the Palestinians feel that Islam is about to win, and that

Hamas' vision (which they fully support) will eventually materialize. They feel that they have no reason to compromise.

And why should they? If the West, under American leadership, does not win in Afghanistan and does not manage to prevent Iran from becoming nuclear, radical Islam (with which a majority of Palestinians now identify) will rightly conclude that determination and defiance pay, and that there is no point in compromising with an enemy that is losing.

So we need American determination. But we also need Jewish determination. The good news is that Israel is a success story and that the Arab states are all abject failures. Which brings me to my second point.

I have argued that there is a theoretical solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but that this solution is currently impossible to implement. The prospect of a nuclear Iran and the further islamization of Palestinian society make the two-state solution even less likely. This is unfortunate, but it is not the end of the world. There is a quote from the Dalai-Lama which I often repeat to myself: *"When you have a problem and you know that you have a solution to it, then you don't have to worry. And when you have a problem and you know that you don't have a solution to it, then you don't have to worry either."* The point is that if we know that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is currently unsolvable, worrying is not going to help.

Of course, peace is preferable to war. We Israelis know that: we've all lost a friend or a relative in wars; we live under constant threat; and our

children enroll in the army at the age of 18 instead of going to College. We don't need anybody, certainly not people who live comfortable lives in the West and who've never experienced the tragedy of war, to tell *us* that peace is preferable to war. We know that, and we know that better than anyone else.

But saying that peace is preferable to war does not provide a solution to intractable conflicts. It's like saying that being smart, handsome and rich is preferable to being dumb, crippled and bankrupt. It's a statement that is both true and powerless to change reality.

As I said, the fact that there is no solution in sight is unfortunate, but it is not a tragedy. After all, Israel is an unmatched success story despite the absence of peace. Some say that Israel will not be able to flourish economically without peace. But this is simply untrue.

Israel is the economic success story of the late twentieth century and of the early twenty-first century despite the fact that it has been in a constant state of war since its rebirth.

Israel doubled the size of its economy while multiplying its population fivefold and fighting six wars. This phenomenon is unmatched in the economic history of the world.

Israel has the highest density of start-ups in the world, and there are more Israeli companies listed on the NASDAQ than European companies. After the United States, Israel has more companies listed on the NASDAQ than any other country in the world, including China and India. In 2008, per capita venture capital investments in Israel were 2.5

times greater than in the United States, more than 30 times greater than in Europe, and 80 times greater than in China.

As for last year's international financial crisis, Israel's banking system remained mostly immune. Israel did not face a single bank failure, essentially because Israeli banks have very conservative lending policies and because Israel's financial market is tightly regulated since the hyperinflation and banking crisis of the early 1980s.

Between 2000 and 2006, Israel fought the five-year Palestinian terrorist war and the second Lebanon War. And yet, during that same period, foreign direct investments (FDI) to Israel tripled, and Israel's share in the global venture capital market doubled from 15% to 31%. In the summer of 2006, just as the second Lebanon war broke out, Warren Buffet bought an Israeli company for \$4.5 billion. This was the first time that Warren Buffet bought a company outside the United States. And right after the war, Bill Gates came to Israel saying that the *"innovation going on in Israel is critical to the future of the technology business."*

Why is that? There are many explanations, but the bottom line is that technological innovation is the ultimate source of productivity and growth, and that Israel is the world leader in technological innovation. The fact that Israel is a country at war does not derail the link between innovation and growth. In fact, Israel has even turned its permanent involvement in warfare to its advantage.

Think about it: among first-world economies, only three (Israel, South Korea, and Singapore) face existential threats, have fought wars for survival, and have a lengthy compulsory military service. And all three

countries are economic success stories. In the case of Israel, the army has produced a wealth of military research applied to civilian applications, as well as technology-savvy youngsters who know one or two things about taking risks and making tough decisions. It is no coincidence if many of Israel's most successful start-ups were founded by young Israelis who acquired their technological knowledge, courage, and social networks in the army.

Now, I'm not saying that war is actually good for economic growth. But I am definitely saying that the *peace=economic growth* equation is wrong. In the case of Israel, adversity has generated creativity. Israel has proven its ability to turn problems into assets. It is the lack of water that has turned Israel into a world leader in the fields of desert agriculture, drip irrigation, and desalinization. And it is because France, our main military supplier at the time, decided to abandon us in 1967 that Israel developed its own military industry and became a world leader in that field as well.

Determination is central to our success. During the first Gulf War in 1991, Israelis were instructed by their government to stay home in sealed rooms with their gas masks. The American chip-maker Intel feared that its Israel factory would be paralyzed. But this didn't happen. Intel's Israel engineers braved Saddam's missiles and ignored their government's instruction, and they came to work. It is Intel Israel that designed the chip in the first IBM personal computers, the first Pentium chips, as well as a new products that saved Intel from decline. War did not prevent Intel's Israel plant to become the company's critical manufacturing center.

So the Arab world's constant aggressions, embargos and boycotts have been unable to hurt Israel because Israel is resilient and creative. If

anything, the Arab world is only hurting itself because it spends more energy trying to undermine Israel than trying to be productive. The results are devastating. The non-oil exports of the entire Arab world (with a population of nearly 300 million people) are less than the exports of Finland (with a population of 5 million). The Arab world produces almost one third of the world's oil and has benefited from a surge in demand from China and India in the past decade, but this is a mixed blessing. Indeed, it is even a curse –what economists call the "natural resources curse." Because they have oil, Arab economies don't feel the need to innovate, create, and produce. And so they don't.

The number of world patents registered between 1980 and 2000 was 77 for Egypt, 20 for Syria, and 15 for Jordan. It was 7,652 for Israel. China, which is a main consumer of Arab oil, published in 2003 a list of the five hundred best universities in the world. The list did not include any of the two-hundred universities in the Arab world.

If Israeli technology could help wean the world from oil, the Arab world would lose its only and unreliable asset. Arab countries might then consider making peace with Israel and making their economies more productive –including through economic ties with Israel. And the world's leading economies would be freed from their geopolitical dependency upon unstable and unreliable countries. This only sounds far-fetched if you don't think about Israel's technological exploits. Just think of the electrical car project of Israeli entrepreneur Shai Agassi. His company, Better Place, is the fifth largest start-up in history. It is developing a revolutionary model to spread the use of electric cars. If Agassi succeeds, as I believe he will, the world's dependency on oil will be dealt a fatal blow.

Ultimately, Israel's success relies on our sense of purpose. As historian Barbara Tuchman wrote before Israel's high tech boom: *"With all its problems, Israel has one commanding advantage: a sense of purpose. Israelis may not have affluence ... or the quiet life. But they have what affluence tends to smother: a motive."*

Keeping this motive, this sense of purpose alive is our challenge –to us Jews both in Israel and in the Diaspora. Which brings me to my third and last point.

A recent study asked American Jews whether the destruction of Israel would be a personal tragedy for them. Among American Jews who are sixty-five and older, more than 80% answered "yes." But only 50% of American Jews under 35 said they would not consider the destruction of Israel as a personal tragedy.

A few weeks ago, a reader posted the following comment on my blog: *"I perceive that young liberal U.S. Jews (i.e., the vast majority) are uncomfortable with the idea of a Jewish "nation" - just as they challenge the ethnic identification of nations generally. This is only natural for an American whose allegiance is to a legal document (the Constitution) and a flag, not a people. How do you make the argument to young Jews who are two generations removed from violent anti-Semitism, attracted to the "tikkun olam" worldview, and skeptical of nationalism generally, that Jews need a separate nation of their own that is worth killing and dying for? I think this is a serious issue that is already manifesting itself in the*

ever weakening support of Israel among under 40, non-orthodox U.S. Jews."

As the survey and the comment I quoted indicate, there is growing estrangement between young, non-Orthodox American Jews, and Israel. The question is why, and what can be done about it.

Let's start with this comment about young and liberal American Jews having a problem with the ethnic identification of nations. Most nations today define themselves ethnically. This is true of the Japanese, of the Germans, of the Russians, or of the Swedes. Indeed, it is because of ethnic differences that a civil war broke out in Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and that Czechoslovakia broke apart twenty years ago. And it is because of ethnic differences that the Québécois keep trying to break apart from Canada. Nationalism and national identity are a fact a life, whether you like it or not. Many academics have tried to de-construct and to de-legitimize nationalism and national identity, but it is a fact that most people identify with a nation, and that most nations define themselves ethnically.

I can understand that some people feel uncomfortable with the fact that many nations, indeed most nations, define themselves ethnically. But nations are entitled to define themselves however they want. And it is illiberal to be judgmental on how they define themselves. So people cannot on the one hand call themselves "liberal" and on the other hand denigrate the way other people wish to define their identity. Why is there such tolerance for gender and ethnic differences within American society, but at the same time such intolerance for ethnic differences within the international community?

It is true that American national identity is not ethnic. But the fact that Americans do not define themselves ethnically does not mean that other nations are not entitled to do so. The way America defines its national identity is the exception rather than the rule. And Israel happens to be part of that exception.

Israel, as a nation, does not define itself ethnically. Being Jewish does not mean being part of an ethnic group. Walk on the street in Israel, and you'll see for yourselves that there are Jews of all types of ethnic backgrounds: Black Jews from Ethiopia, fair-skinned Jews from Eastern Europe, dark-skinned Jews from Yemen, and even red-head Jews (that category includes some of my children).

Until the nineteenth century, with the emancipation of Jews in Europe and the emergence of modern nationalism, most if not all Jews defined themselves religiously. Being part of the Jewish nation and of the Jewish religion was the same thing. It meant being the descendants and inheritors of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and of the children of Israel who left Egypt, received the Torah at Mount Sinai, built the Kingdom of Israel, and were dispersed by the Babylonians and by the Romans. In exile, being Jewish meant living according to the Torah and its commandments and always aspiring to return to the land of Israel.

Secular Zionism tried to redefine Jewish identity in purely ethnic terms by downplaying if not removing the religious content of Jewishness. But you can't write off three thousand years of Jewish history. I know this is going to shock you, but the opening sentence of Israel's Declaration of Independence fails the test of evidence and scrutiny. It says that "The

Jewish people was born in the land of Israel." Really? That's certainly not the way the Bible records the birth of the Jewish people.

According to the Bible, the Jews became a people the moment they received the God-given constitution called the Ten-Commandments. The Bible does not describe the land of Israel as the source of Jewish identity, but as a means to build a society according to the principles of the Torah. Ethnic national movements see their land as the origin of their identities. The ancient Greeks regarded themselves as the original occupants of their land. The French talk about *mère patrie* (motherland) and the Germans about *Vaterland* (fatherland). But in the Bible, the land is neither mother or father. It is God-given and the Jews deserve it only if they honor their contract with God by keeping His commandments.

Ben-Gurion tried to depart from the traditional Jewish narrative by adopting an ethnic definition of Jewish identity. But this simply doesn't hold water, because the Jews do not constitute an ethnic group. Indeed, Israel's citizenship law contradicts Ben-Gurion's definition of national identity. If all you need to become Jewish and to enjoy the right of automatically becoming an Israeli citizen is to convert to Judaism, how exactly is Jewish nationality divorced from Judaism?

The fact that most Jews and most Israelis are not strictly observant doesn't mean that their identity is not, ultimately, rooted in the Bible. According to a recent survey, 98% of Israelis have a *mezuzah* on their front door; 85% participate in a Passover *seder* every year; and 71% always light Hanukkah candles.

In recent years, many Israelis, who received a strictly secular education, have been exploring their Jewish roots. Very often, they travel to the Far East after their military service and then realize that you don't have to fly to India to find spirituality. You can just take a bus to Jerusalem. I recently read the story of an Israeli student who had just returned from a trip with her school to America. When she was asked about her trip, she said she was angry at her parents and at her teachers. When asked why, she replied: *"Because as a Jew who grew up in Israel, I shouldn't have to go to America to see havdalah for the first time in my life."*

We are the People of the Book. The Nazis killed six million Jews not because of the color of our skin or because of some common genes. They killed us because of the ideas and ideals we stand for. They burned our books because they knew that our identity and purpose as a people are rooted in a book. And they didn't send Jews to gas chambers according to their level of religious observance. Our enemies realized what many Jews seem to forget: That whether or not we are observant, whether or not we are religious, our national DNA is the Book of Books.

This Book of Books is the bedrock of Western Civilization. It gave birth to three monotheistic religions and inspired the US Constitution. So if young American Jews can relate to the fact that the source of American nationality is a 200 year old Constitution, surely they can relate to the fact that the source of Jewish nationality is a 3,000 year old Constitution. Not only is our Constitution older; it is the original. America's is the copy. Young American Jews who feel that national allegiance can only be to a document are the ones who have to explain why it's OK when this allegiance is to the copy, but not when it's to the original.

Remember the quote I brought about motive and purpose when I was talking about the Israeli economy? Having a motive and a purpose is what has kept us alive for three thousand years. Motive and purpose are also what have made America a success for over two hundred years. But the fact that more and more young American Jews are willing to identify only with America's purpose but not with Israel's purpose, and that half of them say that Israel's disappearance would not constitute a tragedy *is* in itself a tragedy. It is our duty and responsibility to reverse this tendency. Figuring out what can be done and how is what brings me to my conclusion.

In my opinion, Israel and American Jews must cooperate and concentrate their efforts in the coming years in three areas:

1. Jewish education;
2. Arab propaganda;
3. Renewable energies.

We have a problem with Jewish education both in Israel and in America, for different reasons. In America, Jewish education is too expensive. In Israel, we have University professors who tell their students that Jewish history is a fraud, that Israel was born in sin, and who encourage the boycott and international isolation of Israel.

A few months ago, the head of the political science department at Ben-Gurion University published an op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* calling for the boycott of Israel. A history professor at Tel-Aviv University

recently published a book claiming that there is no Jewish people, and therefore that the Jewish state is both unnecessary and illegitimate. The list is unfortunately longer.

My recommendation to you is not to give a penny to Israeli universities that let these people teach in their midst. Israeli universities that put up with those professors should pay the price for doing so by losing their donations from Diaspora Jews. If anti-Zionistic Israeli professors think Israel should not exist or should not have been established in the first place, what are they doing in Israel? Let them follow the example of Ilan Pappé, a former political science professor at Haifa University, who exiled himself to England. Good riddance.

My recommendation, however, is not only to disinvest from hubs of anti-Zionism but also to invest in educational projects that promote Jewish identity and national pride, both in Israel and in America.

As for Jewish education in America, my suggestion is to establish a fund that would raise money from the Federations, from major Jewish donors, and from the Israeli Government. This fund would give grants to students whose parents cannot afford a Jewish education. And I suggest that Israel takes part in this fund so that Israel puts its money where its mouth is by proving to American Jews and to itself that the future of American Jewry is part of Israel's national interest.

This model of joint funding between Israel and Jewish American donors already exists. This is how "Birthright Israel" is being funded. In 2000, two major American philanthropists, together with other donors as well as the Israeli Government, started "Birthright Israel" to bring thousands

of Jewish American students to Israel for a free ten-day trip. The idea was to show young American Jews who'd never been to Israel what Israel is about. This project is a tremendous success. More than 200,000 students have participated in this program, which is strengthening the Jewish awareness and Jewish commitment of otherwise assimilated American Jews.

The same thing can and must be done with Jewish education in America.

That is not enough, however. Young American Jews with a strong Jewish education would obviously be better armed to face the anti-Israel propaganda that reigns on many campuses in this country. But this propaganda must be addressed, and fought, as well.

Our enemies have not succeeded in their repeated attempts to destroy Israel physically. But they have managed to harm us psychologically. For the past forty years, the Arab world has been orchestrating and funding a propaganda machine against Israel that includes Saudi-funded University chairs in America, media outlets such as *Al-Jazeera*, the manipulation of the United Nations and of so-called Non-Governmental Organizations that receive funds from Arab governments to promote their agendas.

This propaganda has devastating effects. Witness the anti-Israel atmosphere on many American campuses. But witness also the fact that when Israel defends itself, it is condemned for doing so, while the endless aggressions and war crimes of its enemies are excused. Hence the Goldstone Report, and hence the fact that there is an arrest warrant against Tzipi Livni in Britain.

It took the Goldstone Report for Israel to finally realize that we need a strategy to win the war over the international public opinion. And it is about time that we get our acts together. In the past couple of years, some Universities in Israel have started programs to train the next generation of Israelis to professionally and effectively make the case for Israel to the world. I would strongly encourage supporting such projects. But it is also time that Israel and Diaspora Jews set-up together, and fund together, a "Jewish *Al-Jazeera*" that would broadcast in Arabic, in English, and in other languages.

And finally, Jewish American and Israeli entrepreneurs must team up to promote renewable energies. Let us wean the world from oil. Let us start more VC funds that invest in Israeli renewable energy projects. If you doubt that Israel can lead the way in the energy revolution, just remember what Israel has accomplished in the past thirty years.

The challenges ahead of us may seem overwhelming, but we just have to look back at our long and unparalleled history to realize that we have overcome greater challenges in the past. Whenever we preserve our unity despite our differences, whenever we remain faithful to our roots while being open to the present and to the future, and whenever we have daring ideas, we accomplish extraordinary things.

Look at Theodore Herzl. He had the daring idea, from his study in Paris, to rebuild the Jewish state. People at the time thought he was nuts. In a way, he was. And look at what he has accomplished and at what we have accomplished thanks to him. So let us continue to bring the Jewish people and humanity to higher achievements, and let us realize the

closing words of Herzl's book, *The Jewish State*: "*The world will be freed by our liberty, enriched by our wealth, magnified by our greatness.*"