
Jack F. Kemp

The Zionist Dream and the American Dream are ultimately cut from the same broadcloth of our Judeo-Christian values of faith and freedom, and from hope and belief in redemption. We are inseparably linked, not by a common threat, but by a common vision of liberal democracy, a vision which holds that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and are predicated upon the inalienable rights granted us by our Creator. America's founders drew deep inspiration from the

Hebrew Bible, reminding us that America was to be a “light unto the nations,” just as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob told the Israelites.

Though we may be cut from the same cloth, America and Israel do differ in one fundamental regard. America exists to embody the ideals of individual opportunity, of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” as expressed in our Declaration of Independence. As a sister democracy, Israel also exists to ensure individual rights. But Israel has another purpose: To assure the survival and well-being of a particular people, the Jewish people.

As the horrors and evils of anti-Semitism in our own century constantly remind us, the survival and well-being of the Jewish people is by no means guaranteed. Accordingly, I firmly believe that the Law of Return granting Jews the right to seek refuge in Israel must never be overturned. The Law of Return serves to protect individual freedom; it serves as a guarantee of those inalienable rights to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” that have been denied Jews all too frequently in the recent past, solely because of being Jews. Israel, therefore, must always be eager to accept every Jew regardless of age, profession or state of health. Thanks to the Law of Return, never again will Jews escaping anti-Semitism be turned back to face their persecutors. I am certain that had such a law of return existed in 1939, the Jews of Europe would have been saved.

While the Holocaust tragically decreed that Europe would be Jewry’s past, it also decreed that Israel would be Jewry’s future. The best way to honor the memory of the European Jewish past—and of the six million dead—is by cherishing, protecting and nurturing its future as embodied in the rebirth of Israel.

Accordingly, I proudly wear the badge of Christian Zionist. One of the first to proclaim this sentiment was a fellow conservative whom William Manchester called the “last lion of the twentieth century,” Winston Churchill. And I firmly believe in what Sir Winston called “the vision, the hope, the dream” of a Jewish homeland in the Middle East. Five decades ago, Churchill wisely noted that a Jewish homeland “will be good for the world, [and] good for the Jews.”

While praising the benefits that a State of Israel would bestow upon the world, Churchill declared that Israel “will be good for the Arabs who dwell in Palestine, and we intend that they shall not be denied their share in all that makes for its progress and prosperity.” Churchill’s vision has been upheld through Israel’s respect for religious liberty: In the thirty-one years since Israel reunited Jerusalem, Israeli authorities have respected and upheld the rights of members of all religions to pray in their respective houses of worship.

As an American with a deep faith in the appeal of freedom, democracy and entrepreneurial capitalism, I believe that Israel should remain a bulwark for democracy in a region crowded with danger. Over the past decade, democracy has been on the march all over the world, and on the surface, appears to have unstoppable momentum. As the democratic tide speeds up, we all should strive to democratize Israel’s Arab neighbors. The Jewish state is good for the region, good for the world and, yes, good for the Arab peoples, who—I have to believe—must be quietly envious of the vibrant and prosperous democracy in their midst. I say this not out of hostility or provocation, but out of respect for the universality of liberal democracy.

But to grow and thrive, Israel must prosper economically. This, in conjunction with a democratic transformation of the region, will enable the whole region to flourish. Such a transformation will not be achieved with the mere intensive addition of existing physical resources, but with intellectual and creative power—the ultimate wealth of nations. Energetic and entrepreneurial Israeli citizens serve as the engine and fuel that is boosting the Israeli economy and lead to a new prosperity that will be of benefit to the entire region. Just as America was built by immigrants, so, too, will many of these Israeli entrepreneurs be drawn from the latest wave of immigrants to the Zionist homeland. As economic prosperity improves for all, the tides of war are far more likely to recede among those who take part in this emerging consensus regarding the viability of economic interdependence, open trade, and a rising tide of prosperity which, to paraphrase John F. Kennedy, can lift all boats.

Nevertheless, the intent to foster democracy and market economics in the liberal democratic tradition must be tempered by Israel's need for secure borders as a sovereign right and sovereign obligation. When, as we saw just a few short years ago, a Middle East tyrant threatens genocide by poison-gas warfare against Israel and proposes to turn it into the last gas chamber, he declares himself prepared to finish the work of the Holocaust.

Israelis, therefore, can never forget the painful lesson that the Western democracies learned in World War II, a terrible lesson which price was borne in the destruction of European Jewry. When thinking of Israel's security, I think of what Ronald Reagan said in 1984: "None of the four wars in my life-time came about because we were too strong. It is weakness—it is weakness that invites adventurous adversaries to make mistaken judgments."

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