

Where Do the Candidates Really Stand on Israel?

American evangelicals believe that the promised land belongs to the Jews forever, and that they are admonished to support the Jews if we want to be blessed individually and collectively as a nation.

So it should be no surprise that in the Republican presidential primary race, the topic of Israel has been thrust into the spotlight time and again this cycle. All of the candidates say they support the Jewish state in one way or another.

If I'm president, America will stand unapologetically with the nation of Israel," Ted Cruz said. "I have over and over again led the fight to defend Israel, to fight for Israel. If you want to know who will stand with Israel, we ought to start with who has stood with Israel when the heat was on."

"The next president of the United States needs to be someone like me who will stand firmly on the side of Israel," Rubio said. "I'm not going to sit here and say, 'Oh, I'm not on either side.' I will be on a side. I will be on Israel's side every single day, because they are the only pro-American, free-enterprise democracy in the entire Middle East."

They made those comments during Thursday night's debate after Donald Trump repeated a pledge to work to broker peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. But during his candidate forum at Regent University the day before, he said that while he would try to avoid taking sides in those negotiations, he would support our nation's strongest Middle East ally.

A student asked, "Support of Israel is essential for continuing stability in the Middle East, obviously and for maintaining a firm stance against terrorism. Will you

emphatically stand with Israel?" Trump answered affirmatively.

"Very simple answer. Yes," he said. "They've been our most reliable ally, especially in the Middle East, and you look at what's happened with Israel. They were so against this horrible Iran deal. They were so against it. And I'll tell you what; Obama is the worst thing that has ever happened to Israel."

Data prove that a pro-Israel policy is favored by an overwhelming majority of Republican Party voters. While only about 50 percent of Americans agree with that sentiment, according to a Pew Research interview conducted in July of 2014, nearly 80 percent of evangelical Republicans are in agreement.

In fact, Democrats agree too. The same polling data shows liberal Democrats support Israel over the Palestinians by a 2-to-1 margin, while moderate Democrats support the Jewish state by a 4-to-1 margin.

Bernie Sanders, who is Jewish, has expressed his support, although he also advocates for the so-called "Two State Solution" whereby Jews and Palestinians have their own states.

"Israel has a right to exist in security," he said. "And at the same time, the Palestinians have a state of their own."

His opponent on the Democrat side, Hillary Clinton, also expressed support for Israel, saying, "I would extend an invitation to the Israeli prime minister to come to the United States to work toward very much strengthening and intensifying our relationship on military matters."