

Orthodox Jew: Israel's Relationship with the US Could Hinge on Biden's Visit

I was grateful to be invited to speak at the Faith and Freedom Coalition's recent Road to Majority conference in Nashville. I was thinking about this in the context of President Biden's visit to Israel this week, wondering what the tone will be and what will come out of it.

At Road to Majority, there were dozens of speakers and participants far more significant and notable than myself. I aimed to deliver a message from Israel to the conservative, multi-ethnic, international audience that was meaningful and relevant.

As I only spoke during one session, I had the opportunity to attend many of the other sessions, and meet and interact with a number of participants of diverse backgrounds.

My topic was the significance of Israel in the Hispanic community, and the trend to understand and connect with the undeniably deep Jewish roots that as many as one-in-four Hispanics have with the Jewish people. Preparing for the conversation, I was moved to explore biblical and more recent Jewish history of only several hundred years, and how that connects the Hispanic community in general, Latin America, and specifically the Hispanic church, to Israel and the Jewish people.

While I may have been the only participant from Israel, and one of a literal handful of Orthodox Jews, I found that I was not alone in discussing the significance of Israel at the Road to Majority conference.

Even though I work closely with Christians daily, I was taken

by the fact that at the largely Christian conference, Israel was in the hearts and on the minds of so many of the participants. I received a warm reception from everybody I met. Some invited me to come to their states and communities and speak there. Several of the speakers also addressed the significance of Israel from their perspective.

When Nikki Haley was introduced, among her achievements and credits cited was her ardent support for and defense of Israel. Despite being true, I did not expect that would be a topic of conversation or particularly in that context.

The next day, anticipating the arrival of President Trump, Senator Lindsey Graham gave a riveting speech largely discussing foreign policy. Graham was definitely preaching to the choir when he spoke about God blessing those who bless Israel. The response to his remarks was a resounding affirmation.

Graham also alluded to the fact that President Trump was the "best friend of Israel in the White House" ever. As if support for Israel is a pillar of conservative politics, he received no pushback.

"Israel knows that God is on their side, but needs to know that we are on their side. I will do everything to be sure that Israel has weapons needed to stop the Iranians because one Holocaust is enough." Confronting Iran is not only in Israel's interest, Graham said, noting the negative outcome of Iran not being stopped does not just include threatening Israel, but a Middle East nuclear arms race, and that Iran also threatens the United States.

It impressed me that among this largely Christian audience, there was no dissent from these positions. Clearly if the speakers represented the face of the coming midterm election followed by the 2024 presidential election, Israel is and will remain a cornerstone of U.S. policy under Republican

candidates and elected officials.

As I listened, I wondered whether any Democrats today would run on a platform of staunch and unequivocal support for Israel. I know that there are many Democrats who support Israel. But would this be a pillar of any of their campaigns given the aggressiveness of the anti-Israel elements in the Democratic Party? It was a vivid comparison to think that even among largely pro-Israel Democrats, some may choose to check their Zionist credentials at the door or risk of finding themselves targeted by extreme left Democratic competition, which, sadly, has become synonymous with being overtly anti-Israel.

I'm sure there are exceptions. I don't mean or like to paint with broad generalization. However, it's hard to imagine at any Democratic gathering that there would be speaker after speaker espousing their pro-Israel credentials, and being as well received as the speakers at Road to Majority.

One of the most rousing speakers at Road to Majority was North Carolina Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson. I don't recall him speaking about Israel specifically, however he spoke with deep biblical foundation that made it clear his support for Israel was solid.

I thought of this recently reading about the Democratic Party in North Carolina seeking to put in its platform clauses that are virulently anti-Israel. One made the other look more embarrassing.

It's one thing to support the well-being of Palestinian Arabs. I do. It's another thing altogether to have their platform embrace what Palestinian Arabs refer to as the Nakba, the catastrophe of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Adherents of this line of thinking do not do any justice to the well-being of Palestinian Arabs. Rather, all they do is seek to delegitimize Israel's founding.

As egregious as that is, without any evidence, and only citing news sources that are unconfirmed, the North Carolina Democratic Party decided It would censure Israel for what they allege as the deliberate targeted killing of a Palestinian Arab journalist who died in a crossfire between Palestinian Arab terrorists and Israeli troops in May. The U.S.' investigation of the bullet which killed the journalist was "inconclusive" so it's speculative at best as to whether it was fired by an Israeli soldier, much less a deliberate targeted killing.

Tone and substance matter. The bipartisan nature of U.S. support for Israel is hanging on Biden's trip.

Biden is to be credited for coming to Israel this week and resisting some of the extremist anti-Israel positions in his party. However, will he raise the bar and set a positive tone for the midterms and 2024 indicating that support for Israel is positive, or will he (and others) become a lightning rod for the extremists to take on and resist?

Or will support for Israel become a barely tolerated anomaly, or slip through the cracks and not welcome at all? {eo}

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