



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

MS-763: Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman Collection, 1930-2004.

Series H: United Jewish Appeal, 1945-1995.

Subseries 1: Sermons, Speeches and Writings, 1949-1982.

Box
24

Folder
14

Washington, D.C. speech. 16 November 1974.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
American Jewish Archives website.

Washington, D.C. mission

missions
spoken to

U.J.A.

MR. FRIEDMAN.

16th NOVEMBER, 1974.

TAPE 1 - SIDE 1 -

I understand that you have been through a very geographical and emotional experience, up to now, on your trip, - you have been in the North, where most of the action has been for the past, year - and you are here in Jerusalem, and you have things yet to do - I heard about Messada and other trips that you are going to make - but you have a day or two in which to reflect to put all your thoughts together, to try to synchronise what you have seen, to try to exculpate it, to try to put it into some kind of topic sentences, or some kind of paragraphic headings, so that you can give it to the rest of your people when you go home.

You will have had the privilege of seeing what other people will have to listen to it from you, and everybody says - my God I was impressed by what I saw, but how do I bring it across to others. There is no way to bring it across to others, as well as you have gotten it, but you can approximate it, by doing two things - by trying to get them to come on a trip, ~~missions~~ come over every week, or if failing that, try to give them half a dozen topic phrases sentences, to sum it all up, to make the picture as clear as you can for them.

You realise that Israel is in a state of shock, such as she has never been in the entire period of her existence. And so the first thing that you have to talk about is about a people in shock. And a country in shock - and that word describes psychology as much as it describes anything else.

What was it about this country that caused everybody to be so proud of it, about the people who live in it, and about the people who watched it from outside. I remember when you used to talk about this fantastic place, its courage, its heroism its growth, its speed with what it got things done, ~~xxxxx~~ its apparent invincibility, everybody felt that this country was

manned by superman, could do anything, conquer enemies, conquer desert and break rock, and conquer disease, and build towns, and they could do miracles, that was never true, that was always exaggerated - but that was always the way people liked to see the picture, but whether that was fully true or only partially true, the fact remains that concept, that image ~~was~~ took a terrible shock last October - you were shocked and we were shocked, and it is only November, it is only thirteen months later, and we are still living under the shadow of that shock. - the words that were used in this country was earthquake - the earth shook from under our feet.

The people lost faith in their leaders, the people of this country were crying for the blood of Golda, and Moïse, and they would have resigned, out, the heroes were thrown out, they were great, the shock, people were not looking for a scape-goat, people were trying to find out what was happening to them - the loss of belief in leaders, the loss of belief in the Army, which had been the most precious instrument that this country ever had - the cleanest, the purest, the most non-political, serviced by the most idealistic men, when people thought historically of what ~~was~~ Ben Gurion's greatest contribution was to this country, it was the creation of an Army, which would keep this country in tact, prevent civil war, when he had his first early fight with Irgun, in 1948, they sank a ship coming to this country with arms, which belonged to them because he said I would rather sink that ship than have two Armies in this country - they would kill each other, he retained the Ministry of Defence all the years, that he was the Prime Minister, he built the Army as the pride of the nation, the best and most idealistic men went into it, and suddenly the Army is discovered to be fallible, some of the heroes have clayfeet,

how did the errors occur, how did the oversights occur, people are still scratching their heads about it to this day, fifteen months later, so when a nation loses faith in its political leaders and loses faith in its Army, and then begins to lose faith in itself, because plain people are beginning to ask themselves - well maybe we did something wrong - maybe we are not running the country right, and then all kinds of variations of political opinions began to creep in, and many people said - maybe the varieties on which we based our whole position are incorrect - maybe we should deal with the Palestinians, who knows - we got a whole gosh of left-wing opinion, which began to say - maybe they are not so bad, maybe we should give back the West Bank - maybe we had the Yom Kippur war, because we have been stubborn since the six day war - people began to question very deeply every single belief they held before - this is going thorough trauma -

It is very hard for a nation to go through this and at the same time it is going through blood - you have to know what it was like in this country - week after week, week after week, to watch the command cars, all in a very precise way, if the body of the soldier was a sergeant, then sitting in the back of the Command car were six sergeants - stiffly at attention, with the coffin in the middle of the command car, draped with the flag, and a jeep before and a jeep after - and headlights on, and that little convoy of three vehicles, carrying one boy, from a temporary cemetery to a permanent one - and the roads of this country were full - month after month, it took a long time to rebury two thousand five hundred coffins - and when a nation goes through that trauma, day after day on the roads, every stop

light, every cross road, stops, cars halted while this little caravan would go on to one kibbutz on to one side, or one moshav on the other side, this looking at the temporary dead hundreds of them, in some temporary cemetery somewhere, I am sure that those of you who were on missions here right after the war, saw big white stones, hundreds of bodies there, rough stones and gravel, some ceremony for fifteen minutes, it was shocking enough, but that was temporary - ~~xxxx~~ when the permanent burials were made, the country felt pain - in every small neighbourhood, intimate, - this shock ~~xxxx~~ pouring over people, wave after wave of it, at the same time, that the dead were being buried, is not something that was in the far, far distant past, we are talking about an event that took place thirteen months ago -

it seems to me like thirteen centuries ago, so much has happened inbetween - and the people have had to find a resiliency in which, with which to absorb this, fact of the past, although so recent a past, and at the same time, deal with the events of the present. And the events of the present ~~xxxxxxx~~ crowding in - with an authenticity and with an immediacy which I with twentyseven years, with experience with this country, have never felt once, as pointly, as I do now, maybe, I don'tknow, perhaps because now, I live her now, or maybe - although I try to keep objective, I cannot recall in over a quarter of a century, which takes me back to before the State was created, I cannot recall a moment in time when we have been faced with a congruency, a coming together, at the same moment, of three such enounous events which are crowding in on us tonight, as we sit here, tonight, November the 16th. We have crowding in on us another war, we have crowding in on us an econinic bankrupcy, the shocking sensational

aspect of which is the devaluation of last Sunday - and we have crowding in on us of what we hope will be, a huge enormous wave of Russian Jews who will come.

I can remember all the times in the past when we have been faced with war - and when I knew we were faced with war, and when I made speeches in the Cities of America, and warned people that we were faced with war, and people called me a war monger, time after time after time, in the years gone by, when I said that there would be another war next spring - and they said to me - you are crazy, and I said, wait and see -

I can't understand war, and I still can't - we have been through economic recessions in this country before, I remember the winter in 1966, and I remember the austerity in 1950 and in 1951 when we ate in this country, ration food, and you got one egg, and one piece of frozen fish from Norway - and there was no beef and there was none - I know the economic ~~xxxx~~ difficulties through which this country has been, and I know the waves of immigration that have come through - I had a small part in bringing some of them here - but there has never, in twentyseven years, been a moment, when all three of these three things have come together, the ~~xxxx~~ starkness and in the magnitude with which we are being hit with now.

1975 is going to be the most difficult awkward year with which the people of the State of Israel have ever been faced - in 1972 if someone would have said that in ~~xxxx~~ 1973 will be a year in which Israel will have the worst wars that she ever had, I could have accepted that, that was a correct prediction for 1973, but nobody has been able to make any prediction for any year, such as I have just said, that 1975, will be faced with

acts of events of this magnitude. The war may not wait until 1975, who knows, it is only November, 16th - I don't have to spell it out for you - you know what the framework of this scenario is - I can't predict the details, I am not a prophet, but the general framework of the scenario is that you have a very reluctant Syria, and I begin with that, because that is the main source and threat of danger - Mr. Kissinger announced today that he now believes that Syria will not renew her contract for the maintenance of the UN troops, and if that happens, it is due on the 27th or the 24th of this month, I am not sure, of the date, if in fact, Syria does not, renew the contract, with the UN for six months, and tells the UN forces to stand down, then what is called the separation of the forces of Syria and us, where we are separated by the strip of whatever it is four miles, or four hundred yards, whatever it is, if the UN forces are pulled out, and there is no separation of forces, and the two of us come together, and with no UN between us, I don't have to tell you what the potentiality is.

I have always believed that Syria was bluffing and would remain bluffing until the last moment, and at the very last moment would capitulate and would agree because it would be too horrendous for her to be Nasser trick of throwing UN out, but I have always felt that she will bluff and bluff right until the last moment, but then would capitulate, and would allow the renewal for six months, but, never in my heart believed for one split second that if she did renew it now, November, 24th, that she would then renew it April 24th, six months from now - so that people who talk to you about war next spring, are talking to you on the premise that whatever

happens now, there will not be another renewal, and if there is no renewal then, Pesach is the 27th March, enjoy it, and after the Pesach holidays are over, then the stage is set.

I don't know whether they will bluff it out, or whether they are serious, and whether they will not renew - I haven't got a clue we will all know next week -

as far as the rest of it is concerned, Egypt would like, Egypt has renewed at the end of October, the 28th, Egypt wants to try to make peace, in her terms, and her terms are total withdrawal from Sinaï on our part, as what she calls, the second stage - and if we withdraw totally from the Sinai, then she will make certain concessions such as when the canal is ready for working next March, April, she will allow our ships through it, and conversely, if we don't withdraw all the way, she is putting us on warning now that when the canal is clear, she will not let our ships through it - she said that the day before yesterday, very clearly - She is not kidding with us, she is not being merky, she is stating clearly, what she wants, - the danger will not be from the Egyptian front, the danger will be from the Syrian front - the second danger will be the internal fight between Arafat and Hussein - Arafat, the darling of the world, comes to the Bankrup UN wearing his gun and his olive branch, and after that, vulgar and obscene demonstration, gets down from his plane, to go and speak to Castro and from Castro goes to talk to Moscow, to Breznev, and having ~~xxxx~~ touched base with all of his good friends, comes back and will try very nicely to see if he can assassinate Hussein. And if he can, we will be dealing with him, and if he can't he will still insist dealing with him, and our Government says we will not deal with him, and he says, you will deal with me, and the UN says you will deal with him, and the United States, I think will also say,

you will deal with him, we have an emotional block about dealing with him - I don't know whether you were at Ma'elot, he is responsible for it, I don't know whether you were at Kiryat Shmonah - he did it, we have a block, very hard to deal with him, and yet we may have to. And if we have to, it will be a drain, it will be full of bitterness and it will be full of blood, - there is no person in this country, who will say to you - that he truly believes that we can get through the next six months without war -

for a nation of people to say that to you, who in a straightforward and honest look you in the eye way, is not easy, and they don't say it to you, and we don't say it to you for any dramatic effects, but it is just so that you should know exactly what is going on, so that you won't be caught unawares - not be caught unawares, as all of us were last October.

Knowing that we have to face that, knowing that we have used up all the money that the American credit gave us of over two billion dollars for the purchase of Arms, which was supposed to spread over three years, but which was used up in one, thanks by the way, to an Administrative Executive decision by the President Mr. Ford, he had the power to make that decision, he made it, so that we don't have to stream the money out, and buy little bits of equipment, we have been able to replenish with the whole gush, but we are now finished with the 2.2 - knowing that, the wars as they go get more and more expensive, we are faced with a second catastrophic event, of an economic strangulation, ~~wik~~ when the Government was finally forced to act, it had no choice, it was like trying to stop a haemorrhage, we were haemorrhaging out, hard currency at the rate of hundred million a month, on other things that were then going then arms, that had to be stopped, and so now you have in this country, an economic

stringency in which there is no importation of automobiles, or refrigerators, or American coffee, or Danish beer, or any Italian shoes, or any of the things that some of the people have got used to in the past few years, and thank God, the Government did that at last, there have been some of us who have been screaming for it for the past four or five years,

along with that, goes the unbelievable tightening of the belt, in paying two dollars a gallon of gasoline, and paying a pound for a loaf of bread, which our people are simply not used to - bread and cooking oil and sugar, those things had to be subsidized, and now people are going to be hungry in this country - you go to the supermarket and you listen to a man stand there and he said - eggs, have gone up to 40 aurot for each one, and he has got six kids and he wants to give each kid an egg every day, six eggs, is two pounds forty just for eggs each day, and six days a week, fifteen, or eighteen pounds per week just for eggs, and no way, there is no way, he just can't buy it, he will wind up buying the eggs, but he certainly won't be able to buy the meat - not even buy the chicken, the meat is forty or fifty pounds a kilo, when you get a war coming on your back, and in your face, this kind of economic situation when not the rich only, but the poor, are strapped in, and then you take those two things and you add to them that third thing on the horizon, which is not in the same category, as the first two, the third thing, is a lovely wonderful, to be cherished, to be prayed for, to be worked, for to be protested for, how many of you people screamed and shouted and demonstrated in March, and shouted - let my people go - well, Jackson won the fight, and in fact, we don't get double-crossed by - I put that sentence in, because we might very well

get double crossed - not at all sure of it, not at all sure, there are no guarantees, there is nothing in the mechanism there is nothing in the arrangement there is nothing in the machinery, to guarantee anything - we are still on the sufferance of the Russian Government.

But let's assume that the morality of a public commitment, on this thing, will be enough to hold them in line, and let's assume that the blessed ~~an~~ wonderful thing occurs, and we do in fact get into this country - two hundred new Russians a day three hundred days a year, sixty thousand, two hundred people a day coming into this country, day in, day out, and to build houses for them, and to find places in the schools for them, and to find jobs for the people, all of this to be done by whom - by some kind of imported core of civil servants who is going to worry about the Russians - no, all of this to be done by people who are already nervous about another war on their backs, people who are already nervous about not being able to meet ~~xxx~~ their household budget, every week, the same people, who live here, the same handful of people who live here, who do everything else, are going to have to worry about this too.

You are bringing the people of Israel very close to the maximum test of their abilities that you could possibly put them to. And somebody said to me at the table - how is their moral - can they handle this - well, you know, that ~~at~~ this point I no longer talk about they - I don't think, can they handle this, because I have to ask myself, how do I feel about it. I am deep enough in the bogs in the mud of this combination of problems to know what my own reactions are to this. The people of this country will handle this combination ~~of~~ circumstances just fine. Given only one thing, one thing only,

it is not what you think - I almost said, they need your help, that is taken for granted, they need one thing, they need clear inspirational voice of leadership from inside the country, explaining to them why they should make such sacrifices, why they should give more blood, why they should endure terrible stringent economic life, why they should sacrifice again to take in Jews from a far off place,

they need a clear voice of leadership explaining to them why we built this country in the first place, what its undlying values are, what Jewish freedom/^{independence,} and sovereignty means, why those things are worth anything, life itself, they need to hear that sort of thing, over and over again, from their own internal leaders, and what they need to hear from you, and from the outside, is the clearest most ringing, affirmation of support, no ifs and ends and buts about it, and no, giving but holding back, and no offering but criticising, and no saying yes and a little bit of no,

you are going to be tested in 1975 in my opinion, as you were not in 74 or in 73 - and I am not making ~~historical~~ rhetorical statements and I am not making demogical statements, and I am not making campaign statements, to extract another fifty cents out of you, I am telling it to you straight - we are going to be faced with tests such as we have never had - you are going to be faced with such tests that you have never had - and I would only just beg of you, to realise that you are in this with us so deeply that no possibility whatsoever, of any partial performance on your part - this is the point that I want to get across to you -

You have two possibilities - you have an authentic, genuine possibility of non-performance - step away from it, the problem

is just too damn big to handle - and you didn't bargain for it anyway - that is one possibility - and the other possibility is, absolute, total, maximum, commitment, which means more, and more, and more, because that is what the order of the day, the demands are not less they are more - the demands are totally irrelevant to what is happening to the economy of your country the demands are totally irrelevant to what is happening to the economy in England, even the good economy in Canada is beginning to show signs of creaking and strain - all over the world, the world is entering into a recession, it is totally irrelevant - to the obligation that you have.

In the performance of that obligation you can say that you are overwhelmed by the tax problems and that you can't handle this, and you want to know something, we would understand it -

because when you have a huge load on your back you can really understand when somebody backs off because some of our own people are backing off, let's face it, some a few thousands of our own people are cracking up and can't take it, and are leaving the country - so if you say, you can't take it, and it is too heavy and it is too much, we can understand it, but if you don't say that, and you stay in the game, then there are no half-way measures, because that cheats, that fools us, that tax fools us, and we don't know where we stand.

So if you are in it, in it all the way, but all the way, far more, you will have to give more money, you will have to protest more politically, you will have to protest our plank politically, the pressures will be worse, you will have to fight off a huge pro-Arafat settlement, the sentiment that will grow, you will have a lot of things to do that you have never done in your lives before - you may have to scream and yell at the double-cross at the Russian thing, you have got a very, very hard

heavy year's work ahead of you, and I can only say to you that I would like to put the question back the way it was put to me, when the chap at the table said - does he thing that our people here can hold up under this combination of historic pressures I have to turn the question and ask you if you can hold up. I used to know the moral and the mood of the American Jews fery well, very intimately, I had my finger on the pulse of it, down to a very fine point, obviously, I don't anymore, after all these years.

I can only say that in 1974 as a result of the 1973 war, you seemed to have done well, - I think that in 1975 you will have to do better - and if indeed you do, then my basic intiuty feeling, about your historic comprehension, and your deep love for Judaism, and your deep love of the State of Israel, will all turn out to be true, and you will once again act very nobly. We are at an absolute historic cross-road - and you know something ladies and gentlemen, judgement is going to passed on us by our own kids - let alone by anone else in the rest of the world. Because they will understand the nature of this crossroads , and they will want to know how we acted at this moment. You have always been a very sensitive alett generous and loving Jewish community, in your attitude towards Jewsih values, and Israel. What is expected of you now, is to continue on that path, in an excellerated fashion, with no lost nerve, regardless of what will occur - no loss of nerve, and an excessive outpour ing of zealous attention to the needs of this place, and its population, for they are, or we are indeed, all linked, and pay careful attention to our preservation - I think that you will be paying very careful attention to your own. Thankg you very much. Thank you very much, Rabbi Friedman.