

C-7403 Transcription

Friedman, Thomas L. Address. Introduction and remarks by

Herbert A. Friedman. 14 July 1988.

Herbert A. Friedman:

We have a very, um...very lovely, good, um, session for you now. Um...there's nobody uh gonna pounce on Mr. Friedman's eve-  
*that* Mr. Friedman's every word. [laughs] There's nobody going to ask for interpretations of uh clauses and commas. There's nobody gonna ask for whether he is authorized to say what he is saying. In other words, all of the tensions that were in many of the previous sessions, don't exist, don't exist. What we have here is an erudite...professional observer, and, probably, one of the people on this earth who has observed more, in terms of number of years [01:00], and more in terms of geography, and more in terms of the leading actors on the stage, in both places, in Lebanon *and* here, than probably anyone else you will ever meet.

Uh, for those of you who come from that city in the far north, near the Canadian border [laughs] [applause, chatter from audience]. I call that the imported clack, he brought it here with him. Thomas L. Friedman was born in Minneapolis [applause and cheers]. No, that is not Detroit [laughs]...[02:00] He, um,

he had a good, classy education. He went, did- went to Brandeis University, and then he went to se- eh, Oxford, and um, St. Anthony's College is the place [lone cheer from crowd; laughter]...Have we got one? How 'bout...I can't believe it was you! [laughs] [unclear] went to St. Anthony's. If you go back, for some reason, there's a very long history, relationship with that uh, between that college and leading Israelis. And, um, came here to the Middle East. In April '82, he was assigned by the New York Times to be the Beirut bureau chief. '82 is when the invasion into Lebanon took place, within a couple of months, uh, [03:00] after he got there. Two years later, he was transferred to be the bureau chief here in Jerusalem. So he has seen it from both sides. He was taken off the assignment here in Jerusalem in, uh, earlier this year, in '88, so that he could complete a book, and the title of the book seemed to me to be in her, although it's probably going to be changed, but it's...work- oh, that's the final title? "From Beirut to Jerusalem." And in January of '89, when this well-disciplined and professional man, who will stick to his dates, finishes that book, he will be transferred to Washington and he will become the chief diplomatic correspondent for the New York Times, nothing less [applause].

Is...he picked [04:00] up two Pulitzer Prizes along the way. Two! Not one. One in '83, for his reporting in Beirut, and one in '88 for his reporting from Israel. Plus a whole host of other technical uh, uh awards, um, in the journalist profession, and um...and he's a uh, on top of everything else, a charming, educated, good, Jew. Takes part in a lot of the Hartman Institute programs and um, had no hesitation in accepting this assignment, even though it interrupts his own private life of his writing, and if you are a writer you know that every time anybody busts into you, it not only disturbs the train of thought for those few hours, but you're on edge because you gotta...[05:00] sit down and spend some time thinking over what you want to say, and then everything gets uh, garbled up. But he said yes, and he did so with good, good willingness, and we're very happy to have him here today, and I'm happy to present Mr. Tom Friedman. [applause]

**Thomas L. Friedman:**

Thank you

**Herbert A. Friedman:**

...oh the subject, the subject, somebody wrote down was...[indistinct from audience] Yeah, right...[laughs]..."An ideal formula for Israeli diaspora relations"

**Thomas L. Friedman:**

Thank you, Herb. Um, I know there's a lot of people who wanted me to talk about the press, and uh, I wasn't invited to do that, so...maybe later, much later, next year [laughs] um, we can talk about that. But I really was invited to talk about Israel diaspora relations, and that's what I'm going to do.

Um, my speech here is really uh...draws on some ideas I've been working on for my book [06:00], so it's written in chapters, to some extent, or subchapters, and I hope they will all meet at the end to form a whole.

There's a joke, uh, that when the British were about to uh dig the tunnel under the, uh, English Channel, uh they put out bids for who would dig the tunnel. And they got bids of one billion and two billion and three billion. They got one bid from the Upper East End of London, uh, for a hundred thousand dollars, by a, the firm of Goldberg and Cohen. So they thought, well, we better check this out. I mean, uh, who can dig a tunnel under the English Channel for a hundred thousand dollars? So

they sent a man out there and Mr. Goldberg answered the phone, Cohen was on the road, and said, "Mr. Goldberg, how in the world can you dig a tunnel for a hundred thousand dollars?" And he said, [affected accent], "Very easy. What's the problem? I'll start one side with a shovel. Mr. Cohen will start on the other side with a shovel [07:00], and we'll dig until we meet." So they guy said, "What if you don't meet?" "So you'll have two tunnels!" So I don't know if you're gonna have two talks today or ten talks, or whatever, I hope they'll all meet [laughter].

Some people remember where they were when President Kennedy was shot. Others can recall where they sat when the space shuttle Challenger went down. I remember where I was the day I discovered Israel. I don't mean discovered it on a map. I mean the day Israel entered my consciousness and became something of an obsession. It was June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1967. I was sitting in the family room of our home in Minneapolis and the 5:30 PM CBS National News was on. And Walter Cronkite was sitting there with a map of Israel and the Sinai desert superimposed behind him, and was reading the first news about Israel's dramatic victory in the SixDay War. Although I had attended Hebrew school as a young boy [08:00], gone to Jewish summer camps, been Bar Mitvahed, Israel had never really meant that much to me before that day. But

after June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1967, I was never really the same. Like some many American Jews of my generation, I was momentarily swept up by the heroic Israel, which made me feel different about myself as a Jew. During high school, I spent my summer vacations living on a kibbutz not far from here, and Israel in a way became an extension of my Jewish summer camp. It was an exciting time to be in Israel. Everything was in motion, the economy was booming, and although there was a deadly war of attrition going on along the Suez Canal, it hadn't wiped, or erased, the gleam on the cheeks of the Israeli boys. Everything and everyone in the country seemed larger than life. Every soldier was a hero, every politician was a statesmen, every girl was a knockout. With the kibbutz teenagers my age, there were trips to the Sinai, hikes to the Golan, and long afternoons on the Mediterranean beach. After dinner [09:00] we used to sit around the kibbutz lawn, listening over and over again to the James Taylor singing "Rock-a-bye Sweet Baby Jane." I taught them how to play baseball, and they taught me how to identify different fighter planes in the Israeli air force, something which came in very handy when I ended up in Beirut.

The kibbutz was full of lost Jews, some from Europe, some from America, who had flocked to Israel in hopes of finding

themselves. They were a kind of Jewish foreign legion. Most of them lasted for a summer and never came back, but I was hooked. Whatever I was looking for, I found. I guess it was an identity. During those summers I was constantly challenged by my Israeli hosts with the same question, "Nu? Nu? When are you going to make *Aliyah*? When are you going to immigrate? What is there for you in America? Here, here is where you belong." Somehow I always managed to mumble my way out of these challenges, usually with something about how wonderful Minneapolis is with all its lakes. I liked the way Israel made me feel as an American Jew [10:00], but I was never convinced that Israeli identity could be an end in itself.

Then a decade passed. There was college, graduate school, and eventually a career in journalism that by quirk of fate brought me back to Jerusalem as the correspondent for the New York Time in 1984. Upon arrival, I braced myself for that question beginning, "Nu? When are you going to immigrate?" But it never came. When it did come, it wasn't "Nu, when are you making *Aliyah*?" but rather "Nu, how do I get a green card?" or "Nu, what's it like to live in New York City?" or "Nu, can I really get a job in Los Angeles?" After enough such conversations with Israelis, it became clear to me that

something profound had changed in the America-Israel relationship, between those heady days after the '67 War, and the sober aftermath of the Lebanon invasion. Israel was founded on the radical thesis that the diaspora was not a viable solution for Jewish national existence [11:00], that Jews could not survive for long, either culturally or physically, in the diaspora, and hence they had to have a homeland of their own. Israel was going to be the center of the world with its own original Hebrew culture and all Jews were supposed to move there. America, America in the mind of Israel, was supposed to be little more than an afterthought.

For Israel's founding fathers, coming out of the diaspora, that vision may have been true at one time, but no longer. Today, America, with its bounty, its pluralism, and endless opportunities for Jews and other minorities, is disproving that thesis. America, in fact, has become the greatest threat to the Zionist revolution, and as powerful a magnet for Jews as Israel. Not only have Israel and America been quietly competing for years over Jews leaving the Soviet Union, Argentina or South Africa, they are now competing for Israelis themselves. Roughly one out of ten Israelis now live in America, a point that was graphically driven home to me by my high school history teacher



[12:00], Marjory Bingham, who told me while on a visit to Jerusalem in 1987, "Tom, when you were in high school, you and all your friends went to Israel. Now I have three Israelis in my class."

At the same time, many American Jews seem to be reassessing their views about Israel. The Lebanon War, the Pollard spy scandal, and finally the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories, have combined to produce a combined rethinking by many American Jews of their relationship to Israel and its role in their own identity. Where this rethinking will end is not easy to predict, but it is clear, it is undeniably clear, that the relationship between Israeli Jews and American Jews, and between America and Israel, is radically changing from that moment on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1967, when Walter Cronkite introduced me to my Jewish identity and introduced Israel to America.

What I'd like to talk here for the next forty minutes or so is basically...[13:00] how that relationship between American Jews and Israeli Jews, and between America and Israel, has changed, and then, a few words on what the ideal relationship might be.

Israel, in the mind of American Jews, has always touched two emotional chords. One, pride, the other, fear. As such,

Israel has always played two roles for American Jews. One, as a visible symbol which places the Jew in the world and integrates him with pride and dignity, and the other, as a haven that could protect the Jew *from* the world. Between 1948 and 1967, the balance between these two emotional chords was very much weighted toward Israel as a safe haven, and not as a symbol of 'my identity.' Of course, American Jews took pride in Israel, but it was a quiet and understated pride, the sort of pride you take in a good charity. Israel was a good charity, a charity you could be proud of. Some people gave their money to the synagogue [14:00], some people gave to Mt. Sinai Hospital, and other people planted trees in Israel. Israel was a blue and white Keren Kayemeth box you dropped coins in every week at Hebrew school. Only in a small way did Israel culturally begin to inject itself into American Jewish life and become a source of Jewish identity. Hebrew schools began to proliferate, people played "Hava Nagila" instead of Eastern European songs at weddings, and danced the hora and other Israeli dances, but that was really about it. The more important role played by Israel in the mind of American Jews was as a bomb shelter. Israel as bomb shelter. Israel as haven against persecution. American Jews saw it a place- Israel as a place where survivors of the Holocaust

could gather, and where other Jews driven from their native lands by persecution might also go and seek shelter. Israel was looked upon as a source of Jewish power and real estate that could protect Jews, but even when American Jews saw Israel as a haven [15:00], most American Jews thought of it as a haven for *other* Jews, refugee Jews, displaced Jews, but not for American Jews.

Before, uh, 1967, an American friend of mine used to tell me that, in his family Israel was where they sent used clothing. Uh, really, he said, "when I outgrew my shirts and pants, we put them in a box and sent them to Israel. That is how I thought of the place, a place you sent used clothes." After June 1967, however, the perception of Israel in the mind of American Jews shifted radically, from Israel as safe haven for other Jews, to Israel as the symbol of my own Jewish communal identity. The transition can only be understood, I think, in the context of the Six Day Day, first the fear that many people had before the war, of Israel's destruction, impending destruction, and then the dramatic way in which Israel defeated three Arab armies at once. Um, [16:00] it was so dramatic, in fact, and came as such a surprise, both to Israeli Jews and American Jews, and it was in such contrast to what they expected, that it simply blew them

away. It was so powerful, in fact, that it made some American Jews feel that there would never be another Holocaust. It almost cured them of this trauma. "After such a victory, who needs a safe haven anymore?" said some American Jews. "Look who we are! We have power. We are not the Shylock image. We are ace pilots. We are not the cowering, timid Jews who get sand kicked in their faces. We're tank commanders! We're not pale-faced wimps. We're the Hathaway man, handsome, charismatic generals, with eyepatches!" The whole image of the running, craven Jew, who checks the exits as soon as he arrives in a new country, was partially healed by the Six Day War. American Jews were Israel, and Israel was them, and many of them could not embrace it enough as a symbol as source of identity. Gentiles in Minneapolis used to say to me about Israel [17:00], "boy, your people over there are something!" and we would respond, "boy, they sure are! Those are my people."

For American Jews, Israel became their visible body on the world stage, not in 1948 when the state was created, but only after 1967 when it captured their imaginations. The impact of the '48 war on American Jews was relief, relief that the survivors of the Holocaust had a place to go, but the impact of the '67 war was pride and a symbol of Jewish identity. Israel,

in a way, began to replace Judaism for many American Jews after 1967. Israel came along at a moment in American Jewish history when Judaism was ceasing to have a compelling religious hold on many Jews. In an era of secularization and a general loss of traditional values, Israel offered American Jews a new way to organize their own identity and remain connected to Jewish history, but without having to be observant [18:00], without having to go to synagogue every Saturday and spoil the weekend. I know, believe me I know, because I was the epitome of the transformation. It was Israel's victory in '67, I said, which prompted me to assert my own Jewishness. Not five years of Hebrew school, not Herzl Camp, not my Bar Mitzvah. Hebrew school only embarrassed me because I had to get on the Hebrew bus in front of the gentile kids at my elementary school, and my Bar Mitzvah only bored me except for the envelopes stuffed with money. My active involvement with Israel really began in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 1968, in the wake of the Six Day War. The Jewish Agency sent a *shaliach*, a sort of roving ambassador and recruiter for Israel to Minneapolis for the first time, and I became one of his most active recruits. For my independent study project in my senior year in high school, I did a slide tape show on how Israel won the Six Day War. For my high school psychology class,

my friend Ken Greer and I did a slide tape show on kibbutz life, which ended with a stirring rendition of "Jerusalem Gold- "...of Gold," [19:00] and a rapid fire collage of fresh-faced, idealistic looking Israelis up on the screen. I would beam with pride as they flashed those pictures up there, as if to say to my classmates, "take that, you gentiles! What do you have to be proud of?"

In fact, high school for me was one big celebration of Israel's victory in the Six Day War. In a period of a few months, I went from being a nebbish whose dream was to one day become a professional golfer, to a Israel expert in training. I was insufferable. When the Syrians arrested thirteen Jews in Damascus, I wore a button for weeks that said, "Free the Damascus Thirteen" which most of my high school classmates thought referred to an underground offshoot of the Chicago Seven [audience laughter]. I recall my mother saying to me gently, when I put the button on one Sunday morning to wear to our country club brunch, "is that really necessary, Tom?" I became so knowledgeable about the military geography in the Middle East that when my high school geography class had a teaching intern from the University of Minnesota [20:00] for a month, he asked me to give the talk on the Golan Heights and the Sinai. In 1968,

the first story I wrote as a journalist, for my high school newspaper, was about a lecture given at the University of Minnesota by a then-obscure Israeli general who had played an important role in the '67 war. His name was Ariel Sharon.

But Israel did not just become a source of pride and identification for American Jews, it also became the tent pole around which institutional Jewish life in America became organized, and a vehicle through which American Jewry began to discover and support its own power. Thanks to Israel, Jews felt that they had a body to be proud of, and used it to assert themselves and become a community of power, a community that was not frightened or embarrassed to bare its fangs, and bring its full economic and political clout to bear in support of its agenda. That agenda was supporting Israel. In Minneapolis, all Jewish community philanthropy was funneled through the [21:00] local UJA Appeal. Each year there'd be a kickoff dinner with the wealthiest Jews, uh, making donations. The speaker would always have some connection to Israel, usually a general. He would stand before the crowd, breath some fire, flex some muscles, tell some lies, and in the end, the audience would puff out their chests and open their wallets.

But no one talked much about the fact that fifty percent of everything that was donated that evening, in response to this Israeli general, stayed in Minneapolis to pay for the local Jewish hospital, the home for the aged, the Jewish community center, and the various synagogue educational programs. In other words, Israel, Israel enabled American Jewish local institutions to become stronger, more self-sufficient, and more varied. That wasn't all. Israel actually helped produce a vigorous, proud, and assertive American Jewish leadership. The UJA campaign replaced the synagogue as the source of Jewish leadership. In fact, the campaign replaced Judaism altogether [22:00]. A good Jew was not someone who went to the synagogue every Friday and Saturday. A good Jew was not someone who prayed three times a day and put on *tefillin* every morning. A good Jew, in the eyes of most of the community in Minneapolis, was measured by how much time, and more importantly how much money, he gave to the campaign. The campaign became the factory and testing ground for Jewish leaders. There was the UJA young leadership, old leadership, singles leadership, women's leadership, lawyers' leadership, doctors' leadership, even gay leadership, for all I know. Plain old American Jews stopped visited Israel after 1967. Instead, everyone who came seemed to be a leader. Israel crowned



American Jews as leaders, and leaders have to meet leaders, so when they came to Israel on fundraising missions, they met with Peres, Rabin, and Shamir. I was always being asked to speak to visiting Jewish groups as a reported here, but no one ever called me and said, "come speak to a group of wealthy Jews from Chicago." They always invited me to speak to a group of Jewish leaders [23:00] from Chicago.

It became a, a very strange dialectic, this process. American Jewry used Israel to become self-directed, an energized community, and this in turn created a deep sense of being at home in America, for American Jews. It made the United States and increasingly viable alternative to secular Zionism. American Jewish leaders had power, they had dignity, they felt part of their society. There were Jewish senators and congressmen at a conference of presidents, who could see the American President any time they wanted. So with all of that, many American Jews started to ask, "Wait a minute, why move to Israel? Why make *aliyah*? I have everything I could ever want as a Jew right here in the USA. If Scarsdale exists, who needs Tel Aviv?" No wonder Israeli's started to feel slightly ambivalent toward American Jews. The Israelis were nurturing and giving vitality to a

community with whom they suddenly found themselves in competition. [24:00]

Chapter 2 [chuckles]. Just as Americans got hooked on Israel after the '67 war, so Israelis got hooked on America. It's easy to forget today that back in the '50s, when Israeli politics was dominated by the Labor Party, there was much talk about bi-polarity, and Israelis were really very much focused on the Soviet Union. My friend Ehud Gol, for the spokesman- former spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, is forever telling me that I may be married to a nice Jewish girl from Brooklyn, but when I'm in the shower in the morning it's Russian Red Army songs that I sing. It was only after Stalin's anti-Semitic outbursts and Israel's open support for America in the Korean War that the Soviet Union really faded as a potential ally. Then, uh, France weighed in, and there was really a love affair with France. You may recall the most popular singing group in Israel in the '50s was Les Compagnons de la Chanson, a French singing group. Elvis was really a distant echo. Uh, they didn't have television [25:00] here, so really American culture and American singing groups and things of that nature simply never came in. Um, and really, as the author Ze'ev Chafets once put it me, he said, "I wouldn't say that people pitied me for being an American, but

back in '67 there was no great attraction here of being American. America was seen as being an eclipse. There were race riots and drugs and Vietnam and hippies, and Israelis laughed at Coca Cola and women who shaved their legs and weird things like underarm deodorant."

But again Israel's sweeping victory in the Six Day War changed all of this. It injected a new spirit of grandiosity, of Manifest Destiny, into Israel. It ushered out the pioneer era of simplicity in Israeli life, and ushered in an era of consumerism, stock speculating, dollar accounts, credit cards, and living beyond one's means, which peaked in the '70s. The material riches offered by America suddenly gained a new appeal for Israelis [26:00]. If you wanted to sell a bed, you advertised that it was an American-style bed. If you wanted to be hip, you wore American jeans. If you wanted to be in, you bragged of having visited Disneyland, not Paris. Popular American culture cascaded in through television, movies, and advertisements. I once heard an advertisement on Israel Radio for frozen food, in which one actor said to another, "This is our frozen food product." The second man responded, "Excuse me, are you from America?" The first man answered, "No, our system is, but thanks anyways for the compliment!" In the old days,

when you lived American-style in Israel, it meant you stood out like a sore thumb. Now you stand out if you don't live American style. Israelis eat Hamburgers at McDonald's instead of McDonald's and shop at American style supermarkets, count their wealth in dollars not shekels, and are as likely to dress up as Rambo on Purim as they are as Haman or Esther. Americans who immigrated to Israel after '67, attracted to the simple and primitive frontier ways of Israeli life, now complain [27:00] that Israel is turning into precisely what they were trying to escape.

It was during this post-'67 period that I believe America began to pose a serious existential challenge to the Zionist revolution. As Israel became a more normal society, and more like America, it lost some of its distinct identity, and as America became a nicer place for Jews, the ideological terms of trade between Israel and America began to change. Some Israelis began asking themselves, "Why put up with the fake American lifestyle, the fake McDonald's and the knockoff jeans, when I can have the real thing?"

Now, um, of course this view didn't apply to all Israelis, by any means. But those who were influenced by this view began to signal it with their feet. It used to be a stigma to emigrate

from Israel. No one ever left Israel for good, only for visits, or as an Israeli teacher friend of mine remarked, "my sister went to New York for one year [28:00] fifteen years ago." But even these kind of word games are becoming less necessary these days. The image of the *yored*, someone who leaves Israel, has been undergoing a radical transformation in recent years, from a label of denigration, or the "refuse of society" which Rabin once called him,' to a rather neutral term. A PORI poll conducted for the Haaretz newspaper in 1987 found that 57% of all Israelis no longer believe that someone who emigrates is betraying the country. The image of the *yored* has so improved lately, that it's even seeped into Israeli television commercials. In 1988 Bezeq, the Israel national telephone company, began running a commercial, on prime time, showing an elderly Israeli grandfather sitting in front of a shabby, bare, dilapidated desk, and dialing a number with the phone. Subtitled beneath the man were the words "Netania Israel, 6:30 AM." The screen was then given over to what appears to be the Israeli grandfather's [29:00] grandchildren living in Los Angeles. They are shown seated in an affluent looking, comfortable living room, including a color television and a boy playing with a football. Their comfortable surroundings were titled "Los

Angeles, 8:30 PM." This commercial - and their having a phone conversation - this commercial prompted the following letter to the editor in the Jerusalem Post, by one Sara M. Schachter of Jerusalem: "Dear Sirs, I was appalled to see the new Bezeq commercial! This not-so-subliminal message of Grandpa is still in Netania but Los Angeles is a land of opportunity for the young and ambitions, emigration is indeed a major problem for the State of Israel, but I think it's in poor taste for Bezeq to legitimize and exploit this unfortunate fact, and I'm surprised that the editors of Israel Television included this commercial on the air." The letter was followed by an editor's note, which read: "This public service announcement [the Bezeq commercial] [30:00] has been discontinued, following complaints that it would encourage *yerida*."

But I'm afraid the blackout won't help. Today an estimate 400,000 of the four million Israelis, as I said, are living in America, and the number of young, non-Orthodox American Jews who move to Israel for Zionist ideological reasons are really, uh, becoming, I wouldn't say you could count them on one hand, but almost. Uh, meeting a young, secular American Jew who has made *aliyah* to Israel is almost like meeting someone on the street these days who's twirling a hula hoop. Um, you feel like it's

someone just from a different era. A friend of mine, Laura Blumenfeld's, uh uh, who's been an assistant of mine, who has moved here, said, "I ran into my *ulpan* teacher the other day," she just moved here in 1986, "and he said to me, you're still here? I said, 'Yes, I've, I, I've decided to stay for a while.' So he said to me, 'You mean people are still doing that?' It was like I was [31:00] doing some '60s fad that was out of date."  
[coughs]

Now, just as the '67 War brought forth an era of materialism that made individual Israelis get hooked on America, it also made Israel into a regional superpower, which made it as a country, very much dependent on the United States, um, and I think that's pretty well clear to everybody, in terms of Israel now getting about three billion dollars a year in American aid, and that becoming central to the support of the Israeli economy. This in turn created a situation where politically Israel could not take any major diplomatic decision without taking the American reaction into account. As one senior Israeli official put it to me, "There are two kinds of dependency. One kind of dependency is when you're told what to do. That rarely happens with the United States. The other form of dependency is when you act on the basis of anticipated reactions. That happens all

time. It is now a built-in feature of [32:00] daily policymaking here that we ask ourselves, 'What will the Americans say if we do this and what will the Americans say if we do that?'"

Next chapter. Next chapter is called "Tennis, anyone?" It started out as a normal Saturday morning. Bob Slater, the correspondent of Time Magazine and I were having our normal Saturday morning tennis match, at the Jerusalem Tennis Center. We happened to arrive at our assigned court at two minutes before 10, and the Israeli players on the court were in the middle of a point. We walked on to the court but stayed over to the side, so as not to interrupt. At that point one of Israeli players asked if we would please wait outside. We said no problem and stayed outside until the clock struck 10, at which point we returned to claim the court. They were still in the middle of a, a point, and vacated the court reluctantly. As we passed each other, one of the Israelis began mumbling in Hebrew something about arrogant Americans pushing them off the courts. After a few seconds of this, I told the fellow [33:00] that if he had something to say, he should say it in English, at which point he erupted with a lava flow of vile invectives that were variations on "fucking Americans," "arrogant Americans," and "go back to your own country where you belong."



Bob and I stood there, gape-mouthed, watching this man fulminate. When he was gone we just stared at each other across the net dumbstruck. "What in the world was that about?" we said to each other. It was clear that this Israeli was bothered by something more than just tennis etiquette. He must have been nursing some grudge against American Jews for a very long time and our entering his court two minutes early simply lit his fuse. This contretemps occurred just as the United States was putting heavy pressure on Israel to turn over for questioning several Israeli officials alleged to be involved in the Pollard spy scandal. And, uh, at the time of Pollard's arrest, many American Jewish leaders had been highly embarrassed by the fact that Israel was spying on the United States [34:00]. They expressed that disappointment loud and clear to the Israeli government, much to the annoyance of many Israelis. Maybe that was at the root of this man's anger, considering what he said, and this was hardly the first time I had heard Israelis express anti-American sentiments. His anger clearly seemed to be rooted in the resentment many Israelis feel at being dependent on America in general, and American Jews in particular. It's no secret to Israeli officials that Washington gives the extraordinary amount of aid to Israel which it does in large

part because of the electoral clout of American Jews. It is not only American Jews' political lobbying of Congress that is important to Israel, but also their lobbying of the American public at large, the way in which they keep Israel on the American agenda. Although American Jews personally send Israel about 300 million dollars in donations each year through the UJA, through their lobbying of Congress the United States government sends Israel three billion dollars. "Pull the American Jews out of their relationship," remarked [unsure] [35:00], a veteran Israeli diplomat in from Washington, "and the whole relationship will start to shake." In other words, Israel's security and economic wellbeing now depend in part on assistance from America, assistance that will only be forthcoming on a large scale if there continues to be a vibrant American Jewish community that doesn't move to Israel.

Now, Israelis react to this dependence on America and American Jews in a variety of ways, not all of them as volatile as the man on the tennis court. One is by trying to compensate for it by emphasizing what a strategic asset Israel is for the United States, and with a certain cockiness aimed at projecting Israel as larger than life. For instance, one of the most popular t-shirts sold in the old city of Jerusalem, is blaz-

emblazoned with an Israeli F-16 fighter bomber and the words "America Don't Worry, Israel is Behind You." At the same time, I discovered that virtually every Israeli official I met had a quiet disgruntlement toward American Jewish [36:00] leaders. It's not easy to find oneself dependent on people you can't fully respect. As uh, uh, one of Peres's aides said to me, every time he came back from America, all I have to do is attend one Israel bonds dinner in New York and see all those New York Jews and all the schmaltz, and I get so sick, it's enough to never make me want to leave Israel. But not only American Jewish schmaltz and soft-headedness rankles Israelis, but I think also their deep-seated ambivalence about being someone else's vicarious symbol of courage.

Israelis..."American Jews think we're all heroes," said Ze'ev Chafets, the Israeli author, "and like good fans they won't tolerate a negative word about us. They go to the off season banquets, they hear the coaches and the quarterbacks, that is the generals and the politicians, tell them what it's like down on the field. They follow us every morning in the newspapers, they even send their kids to the little leagues here, the summer camps, but ultimately they see us a bunch of dumb jocks. Like all players, we enjoy the adoration, but when

it's you getting your head [37:00] bashed in every day on the field, when it's your son going off to Lebanon, then it's hard to look on the fan without a little bit of contempt."

What adds to these feelings of resentment toward American Jews is the fact that Israelis are now finding it very difficult to deal with the competition from America for Jewish hearts and minds. Harry Wall, the ADL director in Jerusalem, told me once about an exhibit on American Jewry which his organization brought to Israel. "When it was touring America, the exhibit was called 'American Jewry: The Fulfilment of the Dream,' but when we brought it to Israel we decided that we had better change the name, so we took of the b-business about fulfilling a dream, because there is only supposed to be one dream, and that is the Zionist dream. We just called the exhibit, 'American Jewry, from Pre-Revolutionary War to Today.' I invited the top people from the Ministry of Education to come to the opening, and when it was over I told them that they could have the exhibit. They said to me, 'Well, that would be just great, because we've never taught anything about American Jews [38:00] in our school curriculums.' I said to them, 'Huh? You've never done American Jewry?' They said, 'No.' I said, 'We're talking about the largest, most successful Jewish community in the world.' It

turns out that every year they study about a different Jewish community in Israeli schools. They'd done Russian Jews and European Jews and Ethiopian Jews, but never American Jews. It seems that they are too secure and too prosperous. It wasn't a stated policy not to teach children about them. No one said, 'don't teach about American Jews.' It was just understood, you didn't teach about American Jews."

Unfortunately, as American Jewish life has become harder and harder for Israelis to ignore, some of them have taken to running it down, or praying for an outbreak of anti-Semitism in America. There are more Jews in Israel, rooting for Jesse Jackson to be elected President of the United States than anywhere in the world. Neri Horowitz, a young Israeli political scientist, refers to this as Israeli anti-Semitism. My friend Yaron Israchi, a professor [39:00] at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a political dove, encountered the phenomenon firsthand when he was invited to debate a representative of Gush Emunim before a visiting group from Florida of Jewish leaders. "Before the debate began," recalled Yaron, "I prepared myself to explain to these people why they Gush Emunim settlement movement was destructive to our traditions and collective identity and not helpful to our security, and even dangerous for *aliyah*. The

Gush Emunim, I don't remember his name, was the first to talk. He said that the West Bank belongs to the Jews, that it's part of Eretz Israel, and that the Arabs don't count, and that no one should dictate to the Jews what to do. This was a time of a lot of illegal settlements being built. Then he gave a very impassioned speech about the Biblical history and the Torah rights, etc. So one guy from Florida stands up and says, 'Say, you're counting on massive *aliyah* from America and the West to realize your plan for settling the West Bank, aren't you?' and the man said yes. So the guy from the Florida said [40:00], 'How can you possibly expect *aliyah* from Western, liberal Democrats, when what you project through the settlements is a kind of aggressive inconsideration of minority rights and all kinds of other things which tarnish the image of Israel, and can only encourage anti-Semitism from abroad? Because the way you treat your minorities is how Jewish minorities will be treated. What right will we American Jews have to claim to be treated well as a minority?' So this Gush Emunim guy smiled from ear to ear. 'Sir,' he said, 'you don't understand what you're saying. Anti-Semitism is the means through which massive Jewish *aliyah* will come. So if we can contribute to that, you in the West will see all the anti-Semites around you that will encourage you

emigrate, and especially to the West Bank.' Well," added Yaron, "these American Jews devoured him. There was so much anger directed at him from these people from Florida, that I didn't have to say another thing. Israelis like this believe only in *aliyah* through *Apocalypse Now*. For these people, the [41:00] best news of the year is Jesse Jackson. If they lived in Miami, they would be voting for Jackson. For them, the worst-case scenario for American Jews is always the best possibility."

But this Israeli anti-Semitism is by no means confined to the lunatic right. Many American Jews, myself included, were shocked by an open letter to an American friend that world-renowned Israeli political theorist Shlomo Avineri published in the Jerusalem Post in March 10, 1987, at the height of the American Jewish criticism about Israel, um, over the Pollard affair. Avineri, a leading Labor Party ideologue, uh, wrote this letter to a friend, in which he said, which he complained, that American...that the Pollard case was bringing out, quote, "a degree of nervousness, insecurity, and even cringing, on the part of American Jews, which runs counter to the conventional wisdom of American Jewry feeling free, secure, and unmolested in an open and pluralistic society. Let me not mince words," [42:00] wrote Avineri, "some of the responses of American Jewish

leaders after Pollard's sentencing remind me of the way in which Jewish leaders in Egypt under Nasser, in Iran under Khomeini, ran for cover when members of their Jewish communities were caught spying for Israel. You always told us Israelis that America was different. Of course it is, of course. Of course no one will put you in jail or legislate against you. But you are afraid that Jews will not be able to get responsible positions in your government, that Jewish employees in the defense and intelligence branches will be handicap, that Jews will be denied access to sensitive positions. One Jewish spy, one Jewish spy, and look how deep you find yourself in the *galut* mentality. Don't misunderstand me," concluded Avineri, "in no way am I condoning what Israel did in the Pollard affair, but the truth of the matter is simple. You in America are no different from French, German, Polish, Soviet and Egyptian Jews. Your [43:00] exile is different, comfortable, padded with success and renown, but it's exile nonetheless."

What I found so disturbing about this article was not only the fact that so seemingly intelligent a man as Avineri could make such a stupid argument, but that virtually every Israeli I knew endorsed it wholeheartedly. Avineri completely misread the American Jewish reaction. To begin with, he equated the reaction



of American Jewish leaders with that of American Jews. Most American Jews I knew did not give a hoot about the Pollard affair more than a passing shrug, which only showed how secure they really were. Those who did think about it and articulated concerns, primarily Jewish leaders, were cringing not out of fear for themselves. They were cringing in part out of the monumental ignorance and breach of trust evinced by Israel, which they openly and vocally support and continued to support. To compare American Jews, who every year feel at home enough in America to lobby the Congress for 3 billion dollars in aid [44:00] for the Jewish state, who in every crisis since the State of Israel was born, from Suez to the Lebanon War, were not afraid to stand up and defend Israel publically, to compare them to the behavior of Soviet Jews, of Ethiopian Jews, of Iranian Jews, is sheer nonsense. It's the desperate analysis of a man who feels that the only way to attract Jews to Israel is by offering it as a haven and not a compelling option for Jewish life.

Can I get a drink of water? Oh, thanks!

New chapter. Bear with me, I'm almost...halfway done.  
[laughs] [audience laughter] You're gonna hear it all, goddammit. [laughs] The next chapter is called "Heroes and Dead

People." Just as Israelis began to look on America differently, both as an attracting and a threat, as a source of aid and a thorn of dependence [45:00], American Jews began to look, begin looking, on Israel differently. When American Jews first discovered Israel in 1967, it was like meeting a beautiful woman with whom they fell head over heels in love. They didn't just go on dating, they went out and got married and had kids together. But the truth was, the couple really didn't know that much about each other. They were just in love, and love, as they say, is blind. The marriage worked fine as long as American Jews never really did the things you're doing. As long as they never really got off the tour bus and visited Israel, or as long as the only Israelis they met were heroes and dead people. Then, the marriage was trouble free. But the Israeli statue started to come alive for American Jews in 1973, with the '73 War, and then with some of the scandals of the '70s, and finally with the, uh, coming of the Likud and Begin government, with a, its own very different agenda, an agenda that American Jews, liberal American Jews, found a little difficult to deal with [46:00]. American Jews gradually realized that this woman they married had all kinds of crazy relatives hidden in the closet [audience laughter]. Jewish settlers who spoke in mystical terms about

settling the land and expelling Arabs, rabbis who declared that American-style Reform and Conservative Judaism were illegitimate, army generals who compared Palestinians to cockroaches in a bottle. This left American Jews uncomfortable, and excl- exclaiming, "Wait a minute! I married Gold Meir! You're telling me Arik Sharon is in the family?! I married Teddy Kollek. You're telling me Rabbi Levinger is in the family?! I married Yitzhak Rabin. You're telling me Kahane is in your parliament?!"

By the beginning of the 1980s, Israelis had pretty well dragged American Jews off the tour bus, but I would say the final tug came with the Lebanon War. Again, I know because I was part of it. My father-in-law, Matthew Buxbaum, got the bad news while on a weekend visit to [47:00] Aspen, Colorado, during the summer of '82. The news came via a prominent business contact of his from New York City, who was also visiting Aspen. The message was short, and not very sweet. "Your son-in-law Tom Friedman," the man told Matthew gravely, "is the most hated man in New York City today." More than Son of Sam? I thought. [audience laughter] More than Mayor Koch? Could it be? What had I done to deserve this? My crime, it turned out, was that of the

messenger. As the Times bureau chief in Beirut [static; recording missing]...

...in Tel Aviv, uh, ain't never heard of the intifada. So, um, uh, they are the ones who I think have been much more seduced by the camera than, um, uh the Israeli or American Jews have been hurt by it, um, because what happened and what I think happened to them, to a very large extent, is that the TV coverage became an end in itself, instead of a vehicle, or a [48:00] necessary stage, to achieving negotiations. And so, just sort of playing the victim on TV, just became an end in itself. But sooner or later, you gotta get off stage, and when you do, you gotta meet the Israeli. And until you do that, you can be on Nightline from now until Christmas and it ain't gonna get you nothing

**Herbert A. Friedman:**

Hold it for just one second. I would like to make sure, ah, because our time is just about out, and Tom's been up here almost an hour and a half...I would like to make sure that there are no questions hanging regarding the matter of Israel-diaspora relations, or his recipe at the end of what he thought that relationship should be. So, with all due respect, if there are

any questions of that sort, let's get 'em up, and then we'll get back to the political thing if we have any time. We got another ten minutes, and that's all, because Scott and his crew have put in a good lot of effort [audience laughter] [49:00].

**Thomas L. Friedman:**

Keep it down there.

**F1:**

I enjoyed your speech, but one thing you said concerned me. I understand your pain on seeing your cousin eat pork, a pork chop at his Bar Mitzvah, but what concerns me is, don't you think it's unfair of American Jews to demand a certain kind of expression of Judaism from Israelis that we may or may not be, expect of ourselves, and shouldn't we just allow them to express their Judaism as they wish, and be they are here...

**Thomas L. Friedman:**

Right, that's a, a very legitimate question. Unfortunately, the pork chop reference actually referred to a part of this speech I didn't even talk about, which is about the relationship, the religious relationship between the two

countries. I mention it because it seems to me very impor- it, it, it refers to a much larger question. And that is, um, can nationhood, national symbols, speaking Hebrew, etc., be enough to preserve you [50:00] as a Jew? And really the answer is, you know, I think very questionable. One sees this with Israelis when they move to America. The Jews who assimilate the quickest in America are Israelis who come to America, because all most of them have are these national symbols. Alright, they don't have that sort of communal religious experience. I was, uh, giving a talk for an army officers' course, a couple weeks ago, and they were showing me the agenda...it was for Israeli army officers who were going to school in America for two years. And the speaker before me was a speaker who was giving them a talk on how to behave in a synagogue. Um, and, uh, you know, all I'm saying is that, I mention it that, to me, Israel has got to articulate also a spiritual vision of Judaism that's going to be compelling for American Jews. You can't say, you know, "I am the center," okay, "I am the carrier of your Jewish identity," [51:00] and the conduct a Jewish life here that if transplanted to Los Angeles would wither in, uh, you know within a year. And it's really that dilemma which I'm trying to, evoke, 'cause

there's, there's a challenge there, which Israelis shouldn't be allowed to escape.

**M1:**

On the topic of, uh, leadership, all of us are here because we were selected for this program, which means to one degree or another most of us have bought in to some extent to the, the existing leadership, uh, situation, for which we are rewarded, and that, that's how you become recognized as a young leader, by helping perpetuate the system, not by making waves and creating problems that going to hurt fundraising in the short run, and I, my own sense after spending time here over the last several years, and particularly after the last few weeks, is that somehow or another we as leaders have to divert the attention [52:00] from some of the more traditional things that have been done and more toward education, and toward understanding the historical and religious basis for the relationship with Israel, and...I'd like to get your reaction to that assessment, and any ideas that you might have as to how to help bring that about?

**Thomas L. Friedman:**

Um, I mean I couldn't agree more with, you know, what, uh, what you said. You see there is an institutional imperative at work among American Jewish leaders, which almost prevents them from ever offering Israel that kind of critical understanding. The institutional imperative is that they don't get invited to the White House to talk about the Jewish poor. They don't get invited to the White House to talk about the Jewish aged. They get invited to the White House to talk about Israel. And as a result, that makes many of them reluctant to, in any way, to um, uh, you know, voice any kind of critical understanding, sympathetic criticism, I think, to Israel [53:00]. I think what you're doing here I can only applaud, and a story I dropped out of there, but which I'll tell you...I mean it's very refreshing, I must say to talk to a group of American Jewish 'leaders,' um, uh, haha, whatever you are...um, American Jews, period, okay, who don't, who can digest what I have to say. I mean, I'm sure there are people nursing God know what out there, but without standing up and throwing a pie. I mean, I must tell you, I spoke to the Conference of Presidents of major American Jewish agencies, major American Jewish organizations, several years ago, and I'm not afraid to say this in public, they were the dumbest group of Jews I have spoken to anywhere, any time on this Earth



[chatter from audience; light applause]. Um, the, uh, the Women's Hadassah group in Worcester, Massachusetts, asked more intelligent questions, and showed more insight into the predicament of Jews both in America and Israel, than these bozos did [audience laughter]. Now, um, and I, I mean I say that, we laugh, but I find it very sad [54:00]. They came to Israel three months ago, the Conference of Presidents, alright, and before they came, um, the foreign ministry called me up and said the Conference of Presidents is coming here, they insist that you come and give them a talk about the press coverage in the West Bank and Gaza. And I said, "now, wait a minute. They're gonna be here. They're gonna be here in Israel, in Jerusalem. Tell 'em to put on a helmet and a flak jacket one day, and get in a car, and start at the southern end of the West Bank and drive to the northern end and see for themselves! Tell 'em to go on patrol with an Israeli patrol, as I've done on numerous occasions. But I'm not gonna come, sit in Jerusalem and tell them about what's happening five miles away! Well, sure enough, they found two other suckers to come speak to them. They spent an hour and a half throwing pies at them, lecturing them about what was going on in the territories, and then, when I called the foreign

ministry later to ask if they ever went out to see themselves,  
the answer was no. [55:00]

So, uh, I can only applaud what you're doing, coming here,  
looking, seeing the reality, with all its beauty and all its  
ugliness, and going home, and A, being able to educate people  
better on that basis, but also, I think, I hope, having the  
courage and the responsibility to offer Israel something back.

[indistinct voices from crowd]

**Herbert A. Friedman:**

Ah ah ah ah! Time, time, time. Sorry. Uh, Scott n- fellas,  
forget it. Scott and his bunch have put on a show. Tom has  
really, really, extended himself, uh, way beyond the call of  
duty, so we're gonna...we thank him for coming  
[applause]...uh...

**Thomas L. Friedman:**

Thank you. Thank you.

**Herbert A. Friedman:**

And, uh, let me turn the program over now to Mr. Scott  
Apter [56:00], um, and uh, I don't know what he calls himself,  
but it's the uh...[fades]

END OF AUDIO FILE [56:12]

