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A Shabbat Message from Rabbi Arthur Weiner

Friday October 20, 2023 ~ Parsha: Noach

There Is No Such Thing As A Free Lunch.

Dear JCCP/CBT Family,

There is no such thing as a free lunch

I thought of this well-known saying as I watched the moving, heartfelt and incredible [remarks](#) that President Biden delivered from Israel on Wednesday morning. American presidents have visited Israel before. Every American president since Richard Nixon has both publicly and privately confirmed Israel's right to defend itself and supported these words with concrete action. Yet President Biden's words on Wednesday were on a whole new level. Just as he made a statement by traveling to Ukraine in the midst of a war to demonstrate his commitment to Ukraine and its future, he did the same this week for the people of Israel and Jews around the world. I will never forget the passion and emotion with which he spoke, or his clear and unambiguous identification of the unique role of Israel as a Jewish nation and a homeland for the Jewish people. His remarks articulated his commitment to Israel's right to defend itself, and of continued military, diplomatic, and political support. His meeting with families of those held captive were conducted with his characteristic empathy. He came to Israel with a singular message: *"You are not alone. You are not alone. As long as the United States stands — and we will stand forever — we will not let you ever be alone."*

His message was well understood by the overwhelming majority of American Jews who voted for him. His words and actions are being praised and appreciated even among his Republican adversaries. His remarks this week backing Israel's claim that it was Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and not the State of Israel who was responsible for the

tragic bombing of the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza were particularly significant. He placed the prestige of his office and our Defense Department in support of Israel when Israel needed it. It may not play well throughout the Middle East, and will have only limited value in Europe, but it is another statement of unity with Israel, and a message to the American public. Israel is facing a threat equivalent to the one that the western world faced while confronting ISIS. It's time to choose a side. He has made it very clear what side America is on. Despite the tragic events of the last 13 days, I find hope, comfort and enormous pride in his words and deeds.

But there is no such thing as a free lunch.

While none of us know when and how this war will end, cooperation and coordination between the United States and Israel, already on a high level, will be increased to levels unimaginable even 2 weeks ago. That much is certain. But in the aftermath of what we hope and pray will be a successful military and diplomatic campaign to forever rid Israel of the threat of Hamas and its ideological soulmates, Israel will emerge from this tragedy more dependent and beholden to the United States. That too is certain. And while though aligned closely, American and Israeli interests are not always the same. This is a real concern for the future.

Israelis, and most of the political parties that represent them have no faith in the Palestinian Authority or their ability to govern. Yet the Palestinian Authority will be a key player, if not the cornerstone of American plans for a post war Middle East and renewed diplomatic efforts to towards establishing a two-state solution, as it has been for the past 30 years. The list of [concerns](#) that any Israeli government will bring to the table concerning the Palestinian Authority and their ability to govern is long. The Jew hatred that emanates from its leadership on an almost daily basis rivals that of Hamas. How will Israel balance its responsibilities to its citizens and as its obligations to the United States as another terror organization is once again elevated to a strategic partner, as it was during the Clinton Administration?

Israel and the United States have often cooperated but also disagreed bitterly (and publicly!) over Iran. This difference of approach has manifested itself in an Israeli

opposition to a reestablishment of another faulty nuclear deal with Iran. The danger of another bad deal with Iran is one of the few issues that unites the Israeli left, center and right. Yet the Biden administration seeks such a deal, and will continue to seek one when this war ends. Indeed, one of the goals of the administration is to keep this conflict from expanding to Iran's proxies in Lebanon and Syria which would forestall such negotiations. (Concerns about American policy toward Iran is what encouraged such serious negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Israel, so widely reported in the weeks preceding the horrific events of the past 13 days. It is the threat of a nuclear Iran, not some newly discovered love for Jews or Israel that impels this forward.)

The Biden administration will rightly exact a price for its unconditional support for Israel today. But the price of that support, especially when it comes to Iran, may prove quite expensive tomorrow.

Now don't get me wrong. As an American, as a patriot, as a former officer in the US Navy, and as a Jew, I will be eternally grateful for the leadership that President Biden has demonstrated. Without getting overly political, we are fortunate that someone of his vast experience is in charge right now. Israel needs to win this war decisively. And it will not do so without strong American leadership, diplomatic efforts, and military hardware. President Biden has made it clear that Israel will have all three and more. May God bless him for that, and so much more.

But there is no such thing as a free lunch. Stay tuned....

Shabbat Shalom,
Rabbi Arthur D. Weiner