



My Israel Experience

I am an American, and I am a Zionist. I describe myself as a Zionist because I not only believe in the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, but also the necessity of Israel as a beacon of light and hope to the rest of the world and as a partner with the United State in protecting freedom.

My relationship with the State of Israel is patriotic, personal, and spiritual.

As a Jewish child in America, my first experience with Israel was donating money to the Jewish National Fund to plant trees on Tu B'shvat. As a schoolchild learning about the creation of the State of Israel, I couldn't help but think about our own American War of Independence and the shared values that gave birth to both our nations. As I grew older, I saw what friends and family endured during the Six Day War, and learned an important lesson:

Supporting Israel is a matter of life and death.


I first visited Israel in 1985, at age 26, on an American Jewish Congress singles trip. I fell in love with Israel, and had I not had firm plans to finish my education in the United States, I would have considered making *Aliyah* and enlisting in the IDF.

Over time, I began supporting Ben Gurion University (BGU) of the Negev through the American Associates of BGU (AABGU), the American fundraising arm of the university. This relationship has grown over the years. As of the end of 2019, I will have committed in excess of \$1 million personally to the university and am a member of the American Associates Board of Directors.

I founded the Zin Fellows Program which sends a mission to Israel every two years to develop new leaders for Ben Gurion University. Nearly 80 Zin Fellows have participated in the program to date. I also founded the Woodman-Scheller Graduate Program in Israel Studies at BGU's S'de Boker campus. The program provides masters and doctorate programs in English. Students from around the world have the opportunity to study the "real" Israel, in contrast to what is put out by mainstream media.

I chose to focus my philanthropy on Southern Israel because I believe Israel's security depends on the settlement of the South. Even today, nearly 70 percent of the Israeli population reside in the areas of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and the north. This area accounts for only 30 percent of the land of Israel. With this in mind, I became a "Negev Pioneer" in 2017, purchasing a home in Be'er Sheva, an area that we know is well within reach of rockets from Gaza.

I have lost track of the number of trips I have made to Israel over the years. While I have visited traditional sites and cities many times, my trips to Israel do not typically include the usual tour spots. I try to explore the country in its entirety, from the Lebanese border to the Syrian border to the tip of Eilat. I've been to Keren Shalom numerous times, speaking with Israelis who watched bulldozers knock down their homes during the Gaza evacuation in 2005. I've been to the High-



Tech Park in Be'er Sheva where latest in cyber security, artificial intelligence and blockchain technology are being developed. I've been to cooperative farms where Bedouins are learning the economic and environmental power of working together to create profitable and environmentally conscious farms. I've been to industrial parks, built on the notion that one company's waste stream is another's raw material. I've been blessed to be able to share meals in both 1960's publicly funded settlement homes in Yeruham as well as in luxury apartments in Tel Aviv.

I have experienced the heart and soul of life in Israel.

Support for Israel in the United States

I believe a strong U.S-Israel alliance is integral – not just for Israel's continued security but for the safety of the United States and the world. Many Americans don't realize that this cooperation is a two-way street that has benefitted U.S. lives in countless ways. It is not uncommon for the U.S. military and law enforcement to travel to Israel to learn from Israel's counterterrorism tactics.

BDS

The Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement is unconstitutional in its conception. I condemn it and I support sanctions on countries that impose it. At its core, BDS is anti-Semitic. I am appalled by elected officials who try to normalize and mainstream the movement. Congress must defeat the BDS movement and use an American economic bully pulpit to isolate and shame those who embrace it. I would support legislation such as the Trade Promotion Authority, which made halting European BDS a priority in trade talks with the EU.

Iran

Iran and its proxies pose an existential threat to Israel through Iran's terror network. It's goal is to create a solid flow of soldiers and military capabilities from Tehran to Israel through Hezbollah and Assad in Lebanon and Syria as well as Hamas. I support legislation that prevents Iran from ever achieving nuclear capabilities. The Iran agreement (JCPOA) signed by Obama was not just a flawed agreement – it made the world less safe by empowering and enriching a rogue regime bent on destroying Israel and the United States. US withdrawal from JPCOA in 2018 was a good first step. Now we need stronger sanctions and legislation.

West Bank and Gaza

Gaza is governed by a terrorist regime that has no desire for peace and whose power is secured by continued conflict. Since Hamas took over, there have been 6 formal conflicts between Gaza and the IDF. Over 13,000 missiles and rockets have been fired at Israeli civilian targets in the last decade and continue to this day. I support Israel's ability to defend itself from its enemies in both Gaza and the West Bank. I support the classification of the use of human shields and the building of weapons and weapons stores under hospitals, schools, and residential areas as war crimes. We cannot allow Israel's enemies to create a false moral equivalence between Hamas's terrorist activities and Israel's obligation to defend its citizens.



Aid to Israel

Israel is not only our ally but our partner. Most Americans do not realize the impact that Israeli ingenuity and technology in fields such as energy, agriculture, cyber-security, cell phones, medicine, water conservation and desalinization just to name a few. U.S. aid to Israel benefits both countries. Over the years, this financial cooperation has resulted in life-saving inventions such as the Iron Dome missile defense system. I support continued U.S. aid to Israel and will proudly take on any member of Congress who wants to eliminate this aid, including making aid conditional on behavioral policy decisions.

Peace Deal

While we would all like to see peace in the Middle East, ultimately a peace plan must be based reality. That reality must contend with terrorist groups who deny Israel's right to exist and teach violence and hatred as a way of life. Israel should never be forced to make concessions that threaten its security in the name of a political deal. Additionally, when we consider a peaceful 2 state solution, we need to think about how this could work. Gaza is controlled by Hamas. The West Bank is controlled by Fattah. These two Arab groups are experiencing their own ferocious and violent clash for control. It is difficult to imagine what a peace deal would look like with these two groups in conflict with each other.

United Nations

For too long the United Nations has demonized Israel while ignoring violence and bloodshed by Israel's enemies. I am extremely appreciative of UN Ambassador Nikki Haley's courage in standing up to the United Nations, in defending America's right to place its embassy in Jerusalem, and in cutting off funding to corrupt bodies like UNRWA. I hope the United States will continue to display that leadership at the United Nations.