

## A Letter to Senator Lieberman

I have been thinking about your position on the Israel - Palestinian conflict and your enthusiastic sponsorship of Thursday's House and Senate Resolutions.

From a moral point of view, I know that you understand that this is a complex situation and that neither side is without blame. Suicide bombing cannot be tolerated anywhere in the world. Palestinian leadership has not been constructive. It is also clear that Israel's policy of continuing to establish and expand settlements in the West Bank is an insurmountable obstacle to peace.

In a practical sense, the settlement policy and the present raw display of military power are rapidly expanding a regional conflict across the globe. History informs us that the odds of protracted peace between peoples are increased if they have reasons to avoid conflict. Employment, education, commerce, the sharing of resources; all create an inertia favoring improvements to the status quo in preference to radical change.

Throughout history, governments have progressively developed weapons of increasing power and, with the passage of time, these weapons invariably become available to increasing numbers of people. In just a few years or possibly months, weapons of mass destruction, nuclear and biological, will also be even more broadly available. We can expect that more governments will possess these increased powers of destruction and that the new ownership may include non-government groups.

The challenge for all of us is to stabilize the Middle East and other areas of the world while trying to slow and control the proliferation and use of such weapons. It will take cooperation among all of the industrial and post industrial nations, led by the United States, and will entail the use of all of our joint resources to provide for accelerated economic development in impoverished areas of the world while using military power where persuasion is unavailing.

Although prediction is impossible, the probable consequence of losing this race is massive death and destruction, probably first in Tel Aviv and Haifa and then the spread of unimaginable violence to major world cities with the US at the top of the list.

I think you might agree privately that Thursday's resolutions were simplistic. While there is an obvious short-term political benefit to such resolutions, there is serious damage to the worldwide reputation of the US as an honest and thoughtful broker of peace. Unfortunately, this damage will be measured in lives yet to be lost, some of them American. The task

of forming a worldwide coalition to combat terrorism is needlessly complicated by the resolutions.

Since it is clear that your actions and thinking are deeply rooted in morality and faith and since no one doubts your commitment to Israel, you are in a unique position to provide leadership. You are an intelligent and informed Senator who understands the currents of thought in the Middle East. You have friends and acquaintances on both sides of the divide.

In a leadership role, you can explain to Americans that the situation is complex, and act as an educator to reduce passions, illuminate the issues, and inform decision making. You are one of the few Americans of international stature who can apply pressure to both sides without fear of losing political support.

This is one of those junctures in history where clear and decisive leadership is needed and you are in a unique position to provide a portion of that leadership.

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April 22, 2002