

My friends, you may know that I spent the early part of this week at the AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington. As you know, I never mention AIPAC without saying that AIPAC is not a PAC, not a political action committee, which would make it a partisan organization. AIPAC is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and it is the most bipartisan organization I know. We were addressed by the majority and minority leaders of both Houses of Congress, by Prime Minister Netanyahu (this year via satellite), by the Vice President, by Alan Dershowitz, and the list goes on. I will tell you that our new Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, stole the show, bringing Democrats, Republicans, and Independents to their feet several times during a fifteen minute interview with her.

We saw a new machine invented in Israel that makes potable water out of thin air. As much as I follow Israel issues, I never knew that Israel—not Syria, not North Korea, not Iran—only Israel is the only permanent agenda item of the UNSC. But tonight I want to talk about emotion; I want to share with you four words, the four most moving words of the entire Policy Conference to me.

The speaker was a United States official whom I am not going to name, lest this sermon take on a political tone. What I have to say tonight is completely apolitical. The speaker had been sent to represent the United States in a meeting in Germany, and the speaker's spouse and daughter came along.

After the official meetings, the family went to tour the site of the Dachau concentration camp. The speaker had been there many years ago, but both wanted their daughter to see firsthand some evidence of the Nazi Holocaust.

At Dachau, their guide was a ninety-three year old man named Ari. Ari had been a prisoner in Dachau as a seventeen year old young man. He described in detail the horrific conditions: slave labor with almost no food or water, being forced to work barefoot in the freezing winters, the unsanitary conditions that led

to the spread of disease, resulting in many prisoners dying, and of course, the executions. Every single day, some of the prisoners were called away from their work assignments, never to return. Then the seasoned speaker's voice cracked. Ari had begun to cry. He had not cried while describing the living hell he and so many others had endured. He only cried when he ended his story with the four most most deeply moving words of the entire Conference. He ended his terrible story with the words, "Then the Americans came."

I'm not ashamed to admit I was moved to tears. He did not say, "Then we were rescued." He did not say, "Then the war came to and end." He did not say, "Somehow, I managed to survive." He said, "Then the Americans came." It was all he had to say. The Americans came, and his life in hell on earth was over.

I hope it is obvious that not only was I not yet born, but that my parents, may they rest in peace together, were too young for my father's time in the Army to have been in World War II. Yet I felt overwhelming, indescribable pride. Ari's misery ended because my country showed up. Ari knew he needed to say no more to convey his meaning than the words, "Then the Americans came."

My friends, one can debate whether America should be the proverbial world's police force. I have no interest in addressing that tonight. What I will say tonight is that I believe it is beyond dispute that the world has become better for countless Ari's, because of the United States of America. Americans have been killed and maimed because we came to the aid of oppressed peoples around the globe, to, in the words of President Kennedy, "to ensure the survival and success of liberty."

I cannot imagine any American's heart not swelling with pride at those four words. But for me, as a Jewish American, they carried even more weight. I do not have to tell you about our people's history; I need not remind you that a week from Monday night, at our Pesach *sederim*, that we will read in every generation, there

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was an attempt to annihilate our people, words written centuries before the Holocaust. I think that we can agree that the darkest hour of Jewish life was the Shoah. It puts a lump in my throat, a tear in my eye, and pride in my soul, to think that the most horrific and large scale attempt to annihilate the Jewish people, one that took the innocent lives of fully two thirds of Europe's Jews, came to an end with the words, "Then the Americans came." God bless America, and Shabbat Shalom.