

Presidential Candidate Mike Huckabee at Bnei-David Eli Pre-army Academy

Summarized by Netanel Elyashiv, Eli

Thank you, *toddah rabbah*, that's all I can say in Hebrew...

Thank you very much, and I hope it will be o.k. for me to speak in English because if I spoke in Hebrew you would not understand a single word that I had to say.

It is an honor and an extraordinary personal joy for me to be able to be with you for just these very few moments, and I have good news for you, I'm not going to keep you long, so you can hurry back to class and your studies, I know you're very anxious for that.

I'm here as part of a trip that I have made on many occasions, I think this is my 15th time to come to Israel, I've been coming here since 1973, my first trip to here was actually just a few months before the *Yom Kippur* War, although I did not know when I was here that there would be a *Yom Kippur* War. I was all of 18 at the time, and a friend of mine and I, we had just graduated high school, and before we went to college we thought we wanted to see parts of the world and we came, and it left an indelible impression on me that remains to this day.

And the reason I have continued to come back again and again over the years, is because I have seen in the Israeli spirit, in these thirty plus years that I have been coming over the time, an extraordinary sense of commitment to a nation where people yearn to be free, and yearn to have security, and yearn to leave for their children something that is even better than they received. I don't know of anything that any person on Earth wants more, than to be able to live free, to live secure. Unfortunately, in order for that to happen, people have to be willing to pay the price, a personal price, in order to give other people freedom. I am very mindful that the freedom that I enjoy as an American is a freedom that is bought by the blood of the people who through my country have been willing to put on a uniform and serve and sacrifice for my sake. In the United States we no longer draft or conscript people to be in the military. That process ended just before I turned eighteen. I was never called upon to be in the military. People a year older than me

were. I think in some ways, because of that, I am even more mindful that there are people who went before me and people who later after me made it possible for me to enjoy the extraordinary freedom that I have.

I've always felt that America and Israel have a unique relationship. It is a relationship that is not just organizational, it is organic, and both nations come from a people who yearn to have religious freedom and security and to be able to have peace, and to be able to raise their children without having to constantly be afraid for what might happen to them. I also recognize that no nation on Earth has been so relentlessly challenged as has Israel, and I'm mindful that many of you in this room will be called upon to defend not merely the honor of Israel, but the very people who depend on you for their lives. As you willingly put your life in harm's way for them, you provide the extraordinary service and sacrifice that is far far beyond what any politician will ever yield. People have told me before, and I was a Governor for ten and a half years, Lieutenant-Governor before that, and they would say to me: "I appreciate your sacrifice". I made no sacrifice to serve. The sacrifices were made by the people who put far more on the line than merely running for office and serving in some public capacity. So I come here today to salute you and to thank you for the courage and the valor that you bring to you families, to your nation and to G-d.

As I talked to Rabbi Sadan I was most impressed with the fact that the model is to train you not only to be strong warriors, but also men after G-d's heart, as King David was in fact a man after G-d's own heart. Not a perfect man, by any stretch of the imagination, but G-d never calls us to be perfect, because he know that is not obtainable for us in our flesh. He calls us to follow after him. King David – not a perfect man, but a man who truly yielded his heart to G-d. He was a warrior, but he was also a man, who was a poet, who was a singer, a musician, and most importantly – he was a man who loved his G-d and wanted to serve him. I hope you see your service as not mere service to a country and to people, but service to G-d himself. And as you think, believe and practice that, I believe He will be with you. There are no guaranties to the outcome of your lives, but I do trust that many of you will make the commitment that others before you have made, and that is that you will serve with distinct honor. I want to wish you my heartfelt thanks for your willingness to make the service and sacrifice for your country, and I hope that your fellow countrymen will never fail to appreciate what you are here to train to do.

I'm grateful for Israel, it is a friend to America, it's the only real friend that we have in this part of the world. I hope my country will never forget our relationship, and will be strong and vigilant in it. On many of my trips to Israel I've often been given various tokens and gifts. When I was here two years ago, I was given a gift that I thought was very significant. In fact it was interesting because it was in my drawer, and when I was packing for the trip I saw it and I thought: "Maybe I should take that with me, I might find an occasion to wear it". It's a t-shirt, and on the front of the t-shirt it simply says this: "Don't worry America – Israel is behind you", and for that I am grateful, to know that you will be behind us.

Thank you very very much.