

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:39 p.m. in the North Delegates Lounge at the United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he re-

ferred to Jan Eliasson, President of the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Remarks at the National Dinner Celebrating 350 Years of Jewish Life in America

September 14, 2005

Thank you all very much. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for the invitation to be here. My only regret is Laura is not with me. I left her behind to do some diplomacy in New York City. *[Laughter]*

Bob, I want to thank you for your kind introduction. I'm honored to accept this medal commemorating three-and-a-half centuries of Jewish life in America. I consider it a high honor to have been invited to celebrate with you.

Back in 1790, the Jewish congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, wrote to congratulate George Washington on his election as the country's first President. Some say he was the first George W. *[Laughter]* In his reply, President Washington thanked the congregation and pledged to defend vigorously the principle of religious liberty for all. He declared—here's what he said. He said, the United States "gives bigotry no sanction; to persecution, no assistance." And he expressed his hope that the "stock of Abraham" would thrive in America.

In the centuries that followed, the stock of Abraham has thrived here like nowhere else. We're better and stronger—and we're a better and stronger and freer nation because so many Jews from countries all over the world have chosen to become American citizens.

I want to thank Rabbi Gary Zola, who is the chairman of the Commission for Commemorating 350 Years of American Jewish History. I want to thank Ken Bialkin, who is the chairman of the board of the American Jewish Historical Society. I want to thank Members of Congress who

are here. I want to thank members of the diplomatic corps, especially the Ambassador from Israel, Danny Ayalon.

I want to thank two members of my Cabinet who've joined us, Secretary Alphonso Jackson of the Department of Housing and Urban Affairs, and his wife, Marcia, and Josh Bolten, who is the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

I appreciate the Archivist of the United States, who has joined us today, Allen Weinstein; Dr. Jim Billington, who is the Librarian of Congress.

I can't help but notice and welcome Ed Koch, the former mayor of New York City. I want to thank my friend Fred Zeidman from Houston, Texas, who's the Chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council—pay my respects to Lynn Schusterman, who's the president of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, and Sid Lapidus, who's the president of the American Jewish Historical Society.

This may sound a little odd for a Methodist from Texas saying this, but I just came from a shul. I was just given the grand tour of the great American landmark, the Sixth & I Historic Synagogue. I want to thank Shelton Zuckerman and Abe Pollin for taking it upon themselves to restore this important historical site. If you haven't been there, you ought to go. It is a—there's a wonderfully warm feeling. I saw the devotion that has gone into restoring this jewel, which was built nearly a century ago, a jewel that houses three Torah scrolls rescued from the Holocaust. We're proud to have this great synagogue in the heart of

our Nation's Capital, and we're glad a new generation is revitalizing this house of God.

The story of the Jewish people in America is a story of America itself. The pilgrims considered this Nation a new Israel, a refuge from persecution in Europe. Early Americans named many of their cities after places in Hebrew Scripture, Bethel and New Canaan, Shiloh and Salem. And when the first Jews arrived here, the children of Israel saw America as the land of promise, a golden land where they could practice their faith in freedom and live in liberty.

When the first Jewish settlers came to our shores 350 [years]* ago, they were not immediately welcomed. Yet from the onset, the Jews who arrived here demonstrated a deep commitment to their new land. An immigrant named Asser Levy volunteered to serve in the New Amsterdam citizens guard, which, unfortunately, had a policy of refusing to admit Jews. That didn't bother Levy. He was determined, like many others who have followed him, to break down the barriers of discrimination. Within 2 years, he took his rightful spot along [alongside]* his fellow citizens in the guard. He was the first of many Jewish Americans who have proudly worn the uniform of the United States.

And one of the greatest Jewish soldiers America has ever known is Tibor Rubin. After surviving the Holocaust and the Nazi death camp, this young man came to America. He enlisted in the United States Army and fought in the Korean war. He was severely wounded and was later captured by the enemy. For 2½ years, he survived in a POW camp. He risked his life for his fellow soldiers nearly every night by smuggling extra food for those who were ill—it was a skill he had learned in the Nazi camps—and because of his daring, as many as 40 American lives were saved.

This evening, I'm happy to announce that next week I will bestow upon this great

patriot our Nation's highest award for bravery, the Medal of Honor.

Jewish Americans have made countless contributions to our land. The prophet Jeremiah once called out to this—to his Nation, "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf." For 350 years, American Jews have heeded these words, and you've prayed and worked for peace and freedom in America. Freedom to worship is why Jews came to America three-and-a-half centuries ago. It's why the Jews settled in Israel over five decades ago.

Our two nations have a lot in common, when you think about it. We were both founded by immigrants escaping religious persecution in other lands. We both have built vibrant democracies. Both our countries are founded on certain basic beliefs, that there is an Almighty God who watches over the affairs of men and values every life. These ties have made us natural allies, and these ties will never be broken.

Earlier today I met in New York with Prime Minister Sharon and the Ambassador. I admire Prime Minister Sharon. He's a man of courage. He's a man of peace. Once again, I expressed this Nation's commitment to defending the security and well-being of Israel. I also assured him that I will not waver when it comes to spreading freedom around the world. I understand this, that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is an Almighty God's gift to each man and woman and child in this world.

Religious freedom is a foundation of fundamental human and civil rights. And when the United States promotes religious freedom, it is promoting the spread of democracy. And when we promote the spread of democracy, we are promoting the cause of peace.

Religious freedom is more than the freedom to practice one's faith. It is also the obligation to respect the faith of others. So to stand for religious freedom, we must expose and confront the ancient hatred of

* White House correction.

anti-Semitism, wherever it is found. When we find anti-Semitism at home, we will confront it. When we find anti-Semitism abroad, we will condemn it. And we condemn the desecration of synagogues in Gaza that followed Israel's withdrawal.

Under America's system of religious freedom, church and state are separate. Still, we have learned that faith is not solely a private matter. Men and women throughout our history have acted on the words of Scripture, and they have made America a better, more hopeful place. When Rabbi Abraham Heschel marched with Martin Luther King, we saw modern-day prophets calling on America to honor its promises. We must allow people of faith to act on their convictions without facing discrimination.

And that's why my administration has started a Faith-Based and Community Initiative, to call on the armies of compassion to help heal broken hearts. A few years ago in New York, the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty was discouraged from even applying for Federal funds because it had the word "Jewish" in its name. We must end this kind of discrimination if we want America to be a hopeful place.

At this moment, volunteers from all walks of life, across our great land, are helping the good folks of Alabama and Mississippi and Louisiana recover from one of the worst natural disasters in our Nation's history. The outpouring of compassion is phenomenal. American Jewish organizations have already raised over \$10 million, plus the \$50,000 tonight, for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

About half of the 10,000 Jewish Americans who call New Orleans home found refuge in Houston. Rabbi Barry Gelman of the United Orthodox Synagogues of Houston immediately helped organize a task force to aid the evacuees. Five major Israeli universities with study-abroad programs are opening their doors to college students whose schools have been shut down by the storm.

These are the good works of good people relying on the wisdom of the Good Book, a book that tells us how God rescued life from the flood waters. And like Noah and his family, we have faith that as the waters recede, we will see life begin again.

I want to thank you for your patriotism. I want to thank you for compassion. I want to thank you for your love for the United States of America. All of America is grateful to the Jewish people for the treasures you have given us over the past 350 years.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless our country.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:55 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Robert S. Rifkind, chairman of the governing board, Celebrate 350: Jewish Life in America, 1654–2004, who introduced the President; Gary Zola, chairman, Commission to Commemorate 350 Years of American Jewish History; Lynn Schusterman, co-founder, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation; Shelton Zuckerman, vice president and secretary, and Abe Pollin, president, Sixth & I Historic Synagogue; and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission
September 15, 2005

To the Congress of the United States:

I transmit herewith the report containing the recommendations of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission pursuant to sections 2903 and 2914 of the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990, Public Law 101-510, 104 Stat. 1810, as amended. That report includes changes referenced in errata sheets submitted to me by the Commission, including the enclosed errata sheets dated September 8, September 9, September 12, and September 13, 2005.

I note that I am in receipt of a letter from Chairman Principi, dated September 8, 2005, regarding a district court injunction then in effect relating to the Bradley International Airport Air Guard Station in Windsor Locks, Connecticut. Chairman Principi's letter states that, as a result of that injunction, "you should consider the portion of Recommendation 85 . . . that

recommends realignment of the Connecticut 103rd Fighter Wing withdrawn from the Commission's report." The Chairman's letter further states that "[i]f the court's injunction is later vacated, reversed, stayed, or otherwise withdrawn, it is the intent of the Commission that the entirety of the recommendation be a part of the Commission's report." On September 9, 2005, the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit granted a stay of the district court's injunction. Because the injunction is no longer in effect, Recommendation 85 in its entirety is part of the Commission's report.

I certify that I approve all the recommendations contained in the Commission's report.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
September 15, 2005.

Address to the Nation on Hurricane Katrina Recovery From New Orleans, Louisiana
September 15, 2005

Good evening. I'm speaking to you from the city of New Orleans, nearly empty, still partly under water, and waiting for life and hope to return. Eastward from Lake Pontchartrain, across the Mississippi coast to Alabama into Florida, millions of lives were changed in a day by a cruel and wasteful storm.

In the aftermath, we have seen fellow citizens left stunned and uprooted, searching for loved ones and grieving for the dead and looking for meaning in a tragedy that seems so blind and random. We've also wit-

nessed the kind of desperation no citizen of this great and generous Nation should ever have to know, fellow Americans calling out for food and water, vulnerable people left at the mercy of criminals who had no mercy, and the bodies of the dead lying uncovered and untended in the street.

These days of sorrow and outrage have also been marked by acts of courage and kindness that make all Americans proud. Coast Guard and other personnel rescued tens of thousands of people from flooded neighborhoods. Religious congregations and