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Sephardic Jewry in America Honored at DC Tribute Luncheon

By: Rabbi David Bibi

There are voices in Washington, powerful voices, voices who echo our sentiments and feelings and who are unafraid to declare their support for the Jewish people in the state of Israel. Last Wednesday, November 20 2013, I flew down to Washington together with my friends to take part in The Inaugural Tribute Luncheon Honoring the Contributions of Sephardic Jewry in America. While I personally knew most of the participants, it was a great pleasure to hear from our representatives in the Senate and House who take a different view from the one presented by the Secretary of State and the president.

The luncheon celebrated the first American Jews who were Sephardic. We also remembered the life and contributions of Emma Lazarus (1849 -1887) who passed away 126 years ago on November 20th. Emma Lazarus is famous for her well-known poem "The New Colossus", written in 1883, five verses of which are engraved on a bronze plaque in the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty placed in 1903. Few know that she too was a Sephardic Jew.

The event honored my good friend Rabbi Dr. Elie Abadie, Rabbi of the Edmond J. Safra Congregation, NY, Jacob Abecassis entrepreneur and founder of SCOT (Sephardic Community of Toronto), Mr. Daniel J. Harari, founder of SAM (Sephardic Academy of Manhattan), and Mr. Raymond Saka who is the vice president of Sakar International and co-founder of "The Saka Edition-Hebrew/English Yalkut Yosef."

Senator Ted Cruz of Texas compared his family's experience to that of the Sephardic community; how his family faced oppression in Cuba and how they achieved freedom in America

We were privileged to take part in the launching of two books, copies of which were distributed to all participants. The first was 'The Sephardi Journey - Sephardi Contributions Throughout History' authored by Dr. Sarah Taieb-Carlen and published with the assistance of Yehuda Azoulay, founder of Sephardic Legacy Series. The second titled, "The Legacy of Maran Hacham Ovadia Yosef". And we heard from Raymond Saka about their project to complete the printing of expanded English version of Yalkut Yosef over the next fifteen years bringing access to thought out halacha to all.

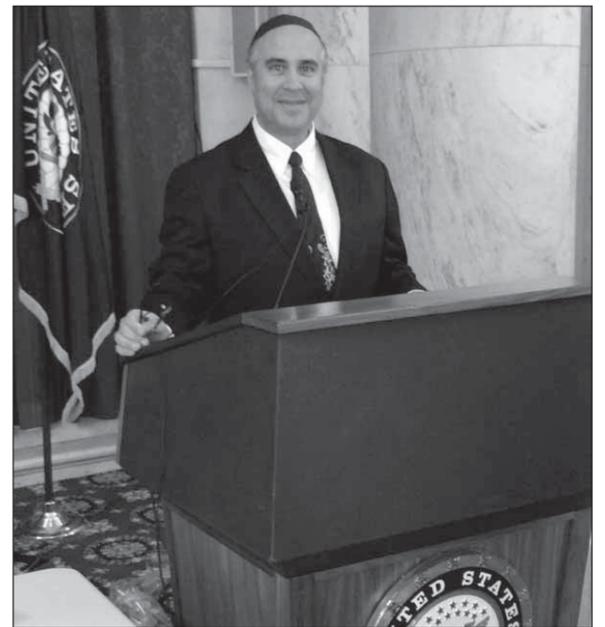
I think though that my



(From left to right) Yehudah Azoulay, Maurice Shohet, Rep. Michele Bachmann, Rabbi Elie Abadie and Raymond Saka



(From left to right) Rabbi Joshua Maroof, Rabbi Shimon Alouf, Yehuda Azoulay, Congressman Louie Gohmert of Texas, Raymod Saka, Jacob Abecassis and Daniel Harari



The Author, Rabbi David Bibi

greatest pleasure was in hearing from the senators and representatives from across our great nation.

Senator Deb Fisher of Nebraska told of her trip to Israel and how she was so impressed with the resolve, the commitment and the courage displayed by the people of Israel. She told of a tour with a military guide who pointed across into Lebanon and explained that 40,000 rockets were pointing their way and to the north east was Iran working on nuclear weapons and her commitment as part of the Senate in backing a loyal ally.

Senator Mike Lee of Utah applauded the Sephardic Jewish Community who contributed to the nation from the very onset of the Republic. He told of the strong connections between the Mormon commu-

nity and the Jewish community in America. He understood oppression and he understood resolve. He pledged his support to the Jewish state and the Jewish people.

Senator Ted Cruz of Texas compared his family's experience to that of the Sephardic community; how his family faced oppression in Cuba and how they achieved freedom in America. He suggested that perhaps his family descended from those who fled Spain in 1492. After seeing the media attempt to portray Mr. Cruz as a right wing lunatic, I found him to be a brilliant man, an amazing orator and a man of principle. He connects to people in a special way. He reaches out and touches your heart. It

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Poll Shows More Americans Say Obama Can't Manage Government

By: Chris Conley

A growing number of Americans doubt President Obama's ability to manage the nation, according to a CNN/ORC poll released on Monday that reflects the possible larger impact of his administration's fumbled rollout of its health-care law.

The poll also found that 53 percent of those polled said Obama is not honest or trustworthy, marking the first time that the CNN/ORC polling found a clear majority questioning the president's integrity, CNN said.

Forty percent of the 843 U.S. adults surveyed in the telephone poll early last week said Obama can manage the government effectively, down 12 percentage points from June.

The poll was conducted Nov. 18-20 amid ongoing problems plaguing the president's signature domestic policy achievement, the healthcare law widely known as Obamacare.

HealthCare.gov, the administration's web portal for offering private health coverage to uninsured Americans in 36 of the 50 U.S. states, has been at the center of a political firestorm over technical problems that overwhelmed its Oct. 1 launch and have dogged the system ever since.

In addition, insurance

companies have canceled millions of existing insurance policies because of the law, raising questions about Obama's promise that people would be able to keep their policies if they were happy with their coverage.

The pollsters said the survey, conducted by ORC International with a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points, recorded the worst scores for Obama during his five years in office in key categories.

It found that 56 percent of respondents said they did not admire Obama, disagreed with him on important issues and

said he does not inspire confidence, while 53 percent said they do not see him as a strong and decisive leader, CNN said.

But the poll also found that the majority of those surveyed said the president still has a vision for the country's future and cares about average people. Seventy percent said he is likable.

Another poll conducted by the Gallup organization put Obama's overall job approval rating at 41 percent, according to the latest weekly findings for Nov. 11-17, down from 45 percent in September, before the healthcare law rollout.



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will be interesting to see how he fares in the march towards the presidency in 2016.

Congressman Louie Gohmert of Texas focused on the unique friendship of the US and Israel. He spoke of his confidence that Israel would always be and that the best course of action for America would be to support Israel. His job is to seek that which is in the best interests of the United States and in doing that job he apologized to his counterparts in Israel because they in fact were defending us and not the other way around.

Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida quoted Emma Lazarus, whose famous poem "The New Colossus" can be seen today on a bronze plaque of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free".

Congresswoman Michele Bachmann of Minnesota praised the ideals to be privileged to have a voice to stand up for Israel and the need to strengthen the sanctions on Iraq.

Congresswoman Grace Meng of New York underlined that coming to a new world is not easy, that the early Sephardic Jewish immigrants paved the way the tolerant, open and pluralistic society we all cherish. Ms. Meng represents many of us

of State.

I am indebted to Yehuda Azoulay for putting this event together. He is young in years, but wise beyond them. He brought together representatives from the Sephardic world from all across our great nation. He reminded us of our history on these shores, but more important, of our potential. He hopes to continue his effort in better unifying us. He clearly showed us that our

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Senator Chuck Schumer of New York is a tremendous orator and quite entertaining. He spoke to us of his own family's experience arriving at Ellis Island. He told how his name Schumer came from the word Shomer - to watch and he understood the responsibility that came from his name. He is obviously very connected to the community representing us for over 39 years from when he was first elected to Congress. And although he represented the Democratic Party he pledged that he was committed to support Israel and the Jewish people and was taking his argument to both the Senate and the Secretary

voice means something; that powerful people want to hear what we have to say and that those same people will support our efforts. We live in a great country, a representative democracy, where we can choose to speak up or to bury our heads. The lesson to all of us is to get involved and get others involved.

We helped found this country. We supported it. We fought for America and we helped build it. Let's continue to be a part of the process. Let us accept our responsibility and our duty. And let us join together in our efforts, because our strength multiplies exponentially when we are united.

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