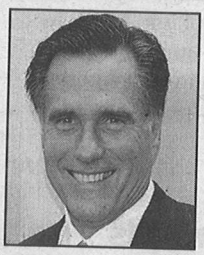
What the GOP hopefuls are saying about Israel

By Alina Dain Sharon
JointMedia News Service

Here are the five main candidates' most memorable sound bites on Israel so far:

Mitt Romney



Romney, still the front-runner for the Republican nomination, has said that President Barack Obama has "thrown Israel under the bus. He has disrespected Israel and undermined its ability to negotiate peace. He has also violated a first principle of American foreign policy, which is to stand firm by our friends."

"It is disrespectful of Israel for America to dictate negotiating terms to our ally," Romney said in an interview with the Associated Press. "It is not appropriate for the president to dictate the terms."

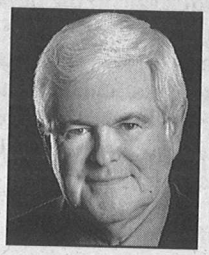
Rick Santorum

A social and fiscal conservative known for his steady focus on US policy toward Iran, the former Pennsylvania senator and chair of the Senate Republican Conference told the Republican Jewish Coalition candidates' forum Dec. 7 that the "theocracy in Iran" is "the real existential threat to the state of Israel."

Santorum noted that he first introduced sanctions on Iran's nuclear program back in 2004. He said the United States needs to make it clear that it "will stop Iran getting a nuclear weapon. Period." Santorum also described the power of oil, saying that it "has given the capability of the radical Islamists to re-tool and re-arm, and to have capabilities increasingly equal to our own."

"We see a blind eye in this administration toward those radicals," he said, recalling how President Obama once referred to Iran as a "little country in the Middle East."

Newt Gingrich



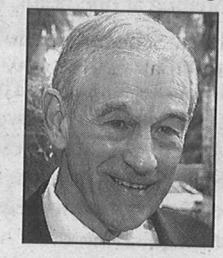
Perhaps the most vocal in support of Israel, Gingrich grabbed headlines by telling the Jewish Channel: "I think that we've had an invented Palestinian people who are in fact Arabs and who were historically part of the Arab community."

Gingrich has also said, according to *The New York Times*, that both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas represent "an enormous desire to destroy Israel."

"It's fundamentally time for somebody to have the guts to stand up and say, 'Enough lying about the Middle East,'" he said, according to the *Jerusalem Post*.

Ron Paul

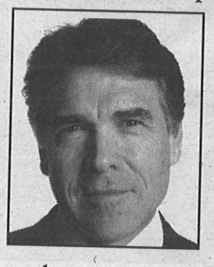
Paul is notably less supportive of Israel than the other candidates. In response to Gingrich's statement that Palestinians are "invented," he said, according to the Jerusalem Post, "to go out of our way and say that so-and-so is not a real people? Technically and historically, yes – you know, under the Ottoman Empire, the Palestinians didn't have a state, but neither did Israel have a state then too."



"Why do we have this automatic commitment that we're going to send our kids and send our money endlessly to Israel?" Paul said in a Nov. 22 Republican presidential debate. "I think they're quite capable of taking care of themselves."

Rick Perry

The Texas governor has called Israel a "strategic alley."



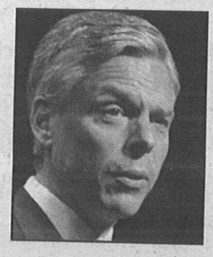
"The Obama policy of moral equivalency, which gives equal standing to the grievances of Israelis and Palestinians, including the orchestrators of terrorism, is a very dangerous insult," Perry said.

"I also as a Christian have a clear directive to support Israel. So from my perspective, it's pretty easy. Both as an American and as a Christian, I am going to stand with Israel," he said.

According to Politico, Perry also praised the Israelis for "taking out the nuclear capabilities" of Iraq in 1981 and said it "made the free world safer."

Jon Huntsman

The former US ambassador to China, Huntsman was quoted as saying, "If we respect and recognize Israel as the ally that it is, we probably ought to listen to what they think is best."



"It could take years before we know what the power structure of these countries and flux will actually be, whether that's Tunisia, whether it's Libya or whether it's Egypt. In the meantime, we've got Israel. And it's been a long time since we reminded the world what it means to be a real friend and ally with the United States," Huntsman said.

He also said Iran "poses unacceptable risks to American interests and our friend and ally, Israel. I will work in partnership with Israel and the international community to ensure that Iran does not acquire nuclear weapons."

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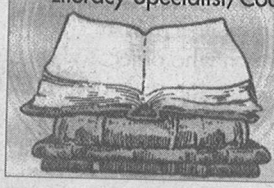

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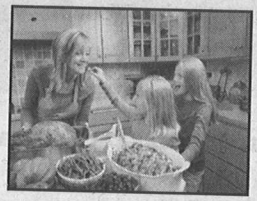
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