



Middle East Spotlight

Two of a Kind

This November marks a momentous occasion for American Jews. For the first time in history Hanukkah and Thanksgiving occur at the same time. And they won't coincide again until the year 79811!

While these two holidays may not overlap very often, in many ways they are similar celebrations. Both are commemorations of gratitude: Thanksgiving is when the Pilgrims expressed their gratefulness for the blessing of the harvest and Hanukkah is when the Maccabees rededicated the ancient Temple, thanking God for their victory over the Assyrian Greeks.

In addition, both the Pilgrims and the Maccabees wanted the same thing: to worship as they saw fit, free from religious persecution. This principle that binds the early Americans and the ancient Jews is one of the many shared values that today links the United States and Israel.

Both nations were founded by refugees seeking political and religious freedom. Both were forced to fight for independence against foreign powers. Both have absorbed waves of immigrants seeking political freedom and economic well-being. And both have evolved into democracies that respect the rule of law, the will of voters and the rights of minorities.

These shared values are manifested today in the strong U.S.-Israel relationship. Close strategic, economic, political and diplomatic ties between the United States and Israel further U.S. interests, promote regional peace and enhance the security of both nations.

The United States and Israel work together to defeat common threats ranging from terrorism, the spread of radical Islamist ideology and nuclear and missile proliferation to narcotics, counterfeiting and cyberwarfare.

Moreover, bilateral ties in trade and technology launched in the 1970s and cemented in the U.S.-Israel Free Trade Agreement of 1985 have yielded groundbreaking advances and joint economic growth for the two allies.

The two nations are also working together like never before in the arenas of energy security and clean technology. The American and Israeli governments, as well as private business ventures in both countries, are partnering to promote new energy solutions and ensure our long-term energy security.

As we put latkes next to the turkey on our plates this Thanksgiving, we understand that it is not just the two foods that go well together. The United States and Israel are truly two of a kind.