

officials not on the outcomes of their decisions, which often turn on unknowable intervening events, but on whether they wisely evaluated the information available at the time a decision had to be made. To judge otherwise, he argues, makes leaders too cautious too often.

This modest rationality is not what you ordinarily associate with Utopian liberal schemers. What makes Rubin's secret appeal so promising is that he'd pull Gore, and the country, to the left. Here's why. The main thing standing between America's current bounty and a sane run at LBJ's unfinished agenda is the Republican drive to use today's huge surpluses for a massive tax cut for the rich. Blocking that tax cut has been the chief aim of Clintonian maneuvering since 1997. George W. Bush has made that tax cut (a far bigger version, in fact, than Newt Gingrich dared offer) the centerpiece of his candidacy. The issue, as they say, has been joined.

If Gore picks Evan Bayh or Bob Graham or some other plain old pol, Bush will look credible arguing the merits of his plan. After all, what do these political lifers know about the real world? Now imagine a race in which, every day, Bob Rubin—the Democrat's super-meritocrat and economic trump card—quietly hammers George “It-was-all-handed-to-me-on-a-platter” Bush for having no understanding of what makes an economy work, while explaining that rich people like Bush and himself don't need a big tax cut when 44 million Americans are uninsured and urban schools are crumbling. When undecided voters take Rubin's side, they'll not only sweep the Dems into the White House, they'll vanquish the big-tax-cut crowd for good.

This rout will free Rubin to whisper to Gore that it's time (and safe) to think big. And he'll be ready: Rubin was the only treasury secretary in history, after

all, with his own antipoverty agenda. He's a dreaded “limousine liberal,” we're told by media heavies, who smirk when intoning the phrase, as if the awfulness of such a state were self-evident. But what's so bad about limousine liberals? Is the alternative—rich people (or pundits) who couldn't care less about poor people—really more “authentic” or attractive? It may not take a village to raise a child, but only a pro-business Democrat with a hundred million to spare is sufficiently bulletproof to persuade folks that its time to do more for those left behind.

Who else would approach Rubin's credibility when they argued, as he does, that the talent he served with in government matches or exceeds the talent he saw during decades at Goldman Sachs? That message, delivered from the veep's bully pulpit, would do more than a thousand handwringing think tank seminars to lure the best and brightest from dot-coms to public service.

Best of all, of course, Rubin is filthy rich, and thus free (under five justices' view of our Constitution) to spend as much as he likes on a Gore-Rubin ticket. With Bush opting out of federal election funding and its associated spending limits to plunder the GOP cash machine, Rubin's ability to plunk down \$50 million could be decisive.

What else can you say? If Gore died Rubin would be a steady hand at the rudder. If markets wobbled he'd be the calmest voice in the storm. And the awkward financial man poses no threat to Gore's charisma gap. Rubin's sane enough to mean it when he says he's not suited to, and doesn't want, elected office. But a party can hope, can't it?

---

MATTHEW MILLER is a syndicated columnist and a contributing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

## Gore & Lieberman 2000

By David Brooks

### JOSEPH LIEBERMAN

The Lord rested on the Sabbath, but it's impossible to imagine Al Gore doing so. The man is a political Clydesdale, his eyes straight ahead, pushing his way forward. As his handlers have discovered, his manner makes him effective on the attack—he is a bludgeoning machine—but it also makes him a little creepy. Why does he seem so intent even when he's supposed to be loose? This is why he needs Sen. Joseph Lieberman as his running mate. Sen. Lieberman does rest on the Sabbath, every Sabbath, because

the Torah tells him to. He obviously has a life outside of politics. And it shows in his gentle demeanor and his reflective nature. Sen. Lieberman doesn't bring many electoral votes to the ticket, but he brings sensibility and balance. People actually like the more authentic Joe Lieberman. He seems like he'd be enjoyable company.

There are three things a presidential candidate needs from a vice presidential nominee. First, he needs him to energize the convention. Sen. Lieberman would do that. Democratic delegates would love the

idea of putting a Jew a heartbeat away from the presidency. It's so Jackie Robinson! They'd be reminded that theirs is the party of civil rights and breaking down ethnic barriers. The press would love it too. There would be so much to write and talk about: the place of religion in society (a circulation builder), the ins and outs of orthodox Jewry, his wife, Hadassah, herself a dynamic personality. There would be endless ruminations on whether America is ready for a Jewish vice-president. I suspect we'd find it is. Remember, while Catholics and Protestants do not form cohesive voting blocks any more, highly religious people do. If you attend services weekly, whether Catholic, Protestant or Jewish, you are more likely to vote Republican. Lieberman would appeal to the highly religious of all faiths, and help the Democrats shake off their secularist tinge.

Second, the vice-president has to be effective in the televised debate. Can you imagine how difficult it would be for the Republican vice-presidential candidate to launch a vicious attack on the Democratic ticket with Joe Lieberman standing at the other podium? The man exudes civility and makes anybody who goes on the attack look like a rabid dog by comparison. How would the Republican raise the issue of the Clinton sleaze? Lieberman was one of the chief Demo-

cratic critics of Clinton sleaze. By joining the Gore ticket he'd be a step toward putting the party beyond all that. Of course, Lieberman wouldn't be much good at attacking the Republican ticket. But with Al Gore at the top of the ticket, the Democrats don't need another hatchet man.

Third, if a Gore/Lieberman ticket were elected, the vice-president would raise the tone of the White House. These days, administrations seem to be staffed by more and more ruthless political players. Once Democratic operatives decided they were going to be as hardball as Lee Atwater, they adopted bare-knuckle tactics with the fervor of converts. The Clinton scandals were all magnified because the Clintonistas lied so blatantly and ruthlessly assaulted their accusers. The counterattack was often more revolting than the crime. Lieberman would at least serve as a hall monitor for all those thrusting 27-year-olds who now seem to run White Houses.

Gore doesn't have a lot of great choices when it comes to vice-presidential picks. There aren't a lot of Democratic governors anymore, or even a lot of promising Democratic senators. But there is one outstanding pick—the guy in the yarmulke.

---

DAVID BROOKS is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.



### ED RENDELL

At one of his final news conferences as mayor of Philadelphia, Ed Rendell was asked if he might like to be vice president of the United States.

A few seconds passed. His eyes glistened. Maybe he was thinking back to a time when the idea would have been ludicrous—that point in the mid-1980s when he had lost successive campaigns for governor and mayor and his once promising political career appeared to have collapsed. But a lot had changed since then. Philadelphia had recovered and so had Rendell.

After two terms as the hugely popular mayor of a city that at one time couldn't pay its bills, Rendell's career possibilities seemed limitless: governor, cabinet secretary, and beyond. And why not? Al Gore himself had given Rendell the ultimate tribute, dubbing him, "America's Mayor." "Do I want to be vice president?" Rendell asked softly in a City Hall reception room decorated with formal portraits of mayors past. Damn right he does.

The Rendell story sells. A gutsy, plain-spoken mayor in the New Democratic mold takes office in the early 1990s. Philadelphia is near bankruptcy. Its bonds have sunk to junk status. Even more worrisome, the city's self-image is suffering and its national profile isn't much better. It wasn't so long ago that police dropped a bomb on an anarchic cult called MOVE, incinerating a rowhouse neighborhood under the watch of former mayor W. Wilson Goode. Rendell wastes no time. He gets down on his hands and knees and scours a toilet in dingy City Hall.

He announces that the city is broke. Determined to cut spending, he wrings wage concessions from a municipal workforce that, he says, hasn't had "a bad day for 30 years." He balances the budget; ratchets down an oppressive wage tax; promotes Philadelphia tirelessly, luring hotels and restaurants and reinventing the city as a tourist destination, a center of culture and arts and sports and entertainment. The mayor's optimism proves infectious. Philadelphians begin to believe.