

The Speech that was Not Delivered

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Note: This text was written on Wednesday, a day before President Obama made his historic speech in Jerusalem. It appears that my text came much closer to his actual speech than I had dared to hope. Some passages are almost identical. Readers may want to compare the texts, to see what he left out.

Dear citizens of Israel,

I feel the need to speak to you directly, and especially to the young Jewish people amongst you, in order to reach out to your minds and to touch your hearts.

To do so, I gave up the great honor of speaking in your Knesset, as my predecessors have spoken before me. The Knesset, like all parliaments, is composed of politicians, but this time I want to speak directly to you.

I COME as a true friend. A true friend is bound to tell you the truth as he sees it. A true friend does not flatter you. He does not twist the truth to make you feel good.

I know, foreign statesmen and women come to visit your country and feel obliged to tell you how wonderful you are, how brilliant your leaders, how great your achievements. I don't think that a true friend needs to do this.

When you are drunk, a true friend does not encourage you to take the wheel. A true friend asks you for the keys of the car.

If you are drunk with power and success, a true friend does not egg you on to behave irresponsibly. A true friend asks you to calm down, to reflect, to weigh your next steps carefully.

That is my aim today.

I CAN honestly tell you that I have always admired the State of Israel, which was born just 13 years before I was.

You have created a vibrant state out of nothing. Just a few years after the terrible Holocaust, one of the greatest crimes in the annals of mankind, this ancient people has arisen from the ashes and established itself as a powerful presence among the nations. You have established a flourishing democracy. Your science, agriculture, high-tech industry and all the other accomplishments in many fields have aroused the envy of many. Your military prowess is acknowledged by all.

No one with eyes to see can deny the profound similarities between the history of our two nations. From a

small group of pioneers, driven by religious persecution, we have developed into mighty nations. Against huge odds, we have built new civilizations. Each of us has built a shining city on the hill. Both of us have achieved liberty and independence in the middle of a terrible war, which threatened our very existence. Both of us had to fight many more wars, earlier and more recent. Both of us can look back on our past with pride and satisfaction.

But both of us know that this history also harbors dark shadows. We have dealt harshly with the people who lived in our countries before us. We have much to apologize for. We should not suppress the bad while celebrating the good.

THOUGH MENACED by enemies, like all of us, Israel can look forward to a bright future. However, dark clouds threaten these prospects. Some of them, I am sorry to say, are of your own making.

It is of these that I want to speak to you.

For the last four years I have followed events in your country with growing apprehension. Indeed—with great fears for your future.

No nation, great or small, can prosper for long without peace. War is the curse of mankind. It coarsens our spirit, consumes our resources, spreads death and destruction. In our time, with the development of ever more deadly means of mass destruction, war threatens our very existence.

Yet there seems to be among you a curious aversion to peace. Peacemakers are denounced as traitors or enemies. Even I have been termed a "Destroyer of Israel" because of my efforts at the beginning of my first term, to bring about peace between you and your neighbors.

I am told that in your recent election campaign, all parties studiously avoided the word "peace". That sounds incredible to me. You need peace, perhaps more than any other people on earth.

I am also told that most Israelis, while longing for peace, strongly believe that "Peace is Impossible". Peace is never impossible, if good men and women earnestly strive for it.

History is full of implacable enemies who made peace after generations of conflict. Look at the peace my country made with Germany and Japan after the deadly struggle not so long ago. Look at the peace between France and

Germany after many generations of war. Indeed, Israel herself has made peace and now lives in friendship with Germany, so soon after the Shoah.

Granted that the conflict between you and the Palestinian people is more complex than most, I tell you: peace between you is not only necessary. It is also possible.

PEACE STARTS with seeing your enemy as a human being. With looking him in the eye.

That should be easy for Jews. Do not the Holy Scriptures, our common heritage, tell us that God created all human beings in his image? Did not your great spiritual teacher, Hillel, tell you that the basis of all moral behavior is not to do unto the Other that which is hateful to you?

I am told that lately, there has become evident a rising tide of racism among you, that there have even been incidents of lynching, that many young boys and girls are proud to announce that they are racists.

I find this incredible. Jews? Racists? After centuries as the victims of racist persecution? Barely more than half a century after the Holocaust?

I am a dark-skinned person. Luckily, my forebears never experienced the ultimate evil of slavery. Unlike millions of Africans, my father's family was not kidnapped from their ancestral village in Kenya. But the evils of slavery are deeply imprinted on my mind. The awful sight of the lynchings is still vivid before my eyes.

So are the freedom marches, in which determined black people braved racist mobs, guns and attack dogs. We shall ever be grateful to the white young men and women who joined these marches, so many of whom were Jews. I just cannot understand: how can any Jew in Israel be a racist, and be proud of it? What on earth do you learn in your schools?

I DID not come here to try and impose a peace plan on you.

Peace should not be imposed. It must flow from the heart. It must be approved by the mind.

Let me share with you, however, a few things that seem to me self-evident:

Peace must be based on what is commonly called the "two-state solution". Two states for two peoples, for the Israelis and for the Palestinians.

It is not only the best solution—it is the only solution.

Those who bandy about other "solutions" are deluding themselves. There is no other solution.

There must be a Palestinian state, side by side with Israel. Your fathers and mothers were content with nothing less than a state of their own, and the Palestinians will not settle for anything less either. Freedom and independence under their own flag is the right of all human beings. You should be the first to understand that.

The State of Palestine must include all the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. Any changes to the borders must be agreed between the two sides, and be of equal

extent.

Jerusalem, this wonderful old city where we are meeting now, and which fills me with excitement, must be shared by the two peoples. What is Arab should be the capital of Palestine, what is Jewish should be the capital of Israel, recognized at long last by all.

The security of Israel must be safeguarded and guaranteed by the world, especially by the United States of America. And so should the security of Palestine.

Obviously, the millions of Palestinian refugees cannot return to Israel. Justice cannot be restored by imposing a new injustice on the present inhabitants. But we must make a great international effort to compensate the refugees generously, and at least a symbolic number should be allowed to exercise their Right of Return.

These peace terms have been lying on the table for a long time. The time has come—indeed, the time is long overdue—to turn them into a permanent peace treaty. The other Arab nations, whose commendable peace plan has also been lying on the table for many years, should be welcomed as partners in this effort.

My administration will do its duty by signing a solemn guarantee for the security of both Israel and Palestine.

A WORD about the settlements.

The United States has always regarded them as illegal under international law. This is as true now as ever.

Those Israelis who remain on Palestinian territory after the mutually agreed exchange of territories must be repatriated to Israel. As gently as possible. With as much compassion as possible. With as generous compensation as possible. But they cannot stay without the permission of the government of Palestine.

Many of them have settled in the occupied territories for the express purpose of making peace impossible. They must not be allowed to achieve their aim.

I STAND here today, so soon after the swearing-in of your new ministers, before your new government has yet settled down for business, because I feel a great urgency.

Time is passing, settlements are expanding, the chances of peace are diminishing. Therefore we must act now.

If you continue on your present course, disaster will surely overtake you. You are already a minority in the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, and your proportion is bound to diminish. Very soon you will be faced by the choice between glorious Israel becoming an odious Apartheid state, a pariah among the nations, or becoming a state governed by the Arab majority. Either way, it will be the end of the Zionist dream.

Don't tell me, don't tell yourselves, that there is nothing you can do.

You are the people of the future. The future is your lives. It is up to you to assure yourselves a life in peace.

Yes, you can!!!