



# Prime Minister's Office

## PM Netanyahu's Address to the UN General Assembly



Photo by Avi Ohayon, GPO

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over three millennia ago, our great leader Moses addressed the people of Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land.

He said they would find there two mountains facing one another: Mount Gerizim, the site on which a great blessing would be proclaimed, and Mount Ebal, the site of a great curse.

Moses said the people's fate would be determined by the choice they made between the blessing and the curse.

That same choice has echoed down the ages not just for the people of Israel but for all humanity.

We face such a choice today.

It will determine whether we enjoy the blessings of a historic peace of boundless prosperity and hope or suffer the curse of a horrific war, of terrorism and despair.

When I last spoke at this podium five years ago, I warned about the tyrants of Tehran. They have been nothing but a curse. A curse to their own people, to our region, to the entire world.

But at that time, I also spoke about a great blessing that I could see on the horizon.

Here's what I said. Quote: "The common threat of Iran has brought Israel and many Arab states closer than ever before in a friendship that I have not seen in my lifetime."

I said: "The day would soon arrive when Israel would be able to expand peace beyond Egypt and Jordan to other Arab neighbors." End quote.

Now, in countless meetings with world leaders, I made the case that Israel and the Arab states shared many common interests, and that I believed that these many common interests could facilitate a breakthrough for a broader peace in our region.

You applaud now, but at the time, many dismissed my optimism as wishful thinking.

Their pessimism was based on a quarter-century of good intentions and failed peacemaking.

Why were these good intentions, why did they always meet failure?

Because they were based on one false idea, that unless we first concluded a peace agreement with the Palestinians, no other Arab state would normalize its relations with Israel.

I've long sought to make peace with the Palestinians.

But I also believe that we must not give the Palestinians a veto over new peace treaties with Arab states.

The Palestinians could greatly benefit from a broader peace. They should be part of the process, but they should not have a veto over the process.

And I also believe that making peace with more Arab states would actually increase the prospects of making peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

See, the Palestinians are only 2% of the Arab world. As long as they believe that the other 98% will remain in a war-like state with Israel, that larger mass, that larger Arab world could eventually choke, dissolve, destroy the Jewish state.

So when the Palestinians see that most of the Arab world has reconciled itself to the Jewish state, they too will be more likely to abandon the fantasy of destroying Israel and finally embrace a path of genuine peace with it.

For years, my approach to peace was rejected by the so-called experts.

Well, they were wrong.

Under their approach, we didn't forge a single peace treaty for a quarter century.

Yet in 2020, under the approach that I advocated, we tried something different, and in no time we achieved a remarkable breakthrough.

We achieved four peace treaties working with the United States. Israel forged four peace agreements in four months with four Arab states: the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco.

The Abraham Accords were a pivot of history.

And today, we all see the blessings of those accords.

Trade and investment with our new peace partners are booming.

Our nations cooperate in commerce, energy, water, agriculture, medicine, climate and many many other fields.

Close to a million Israelis have visited the United Arab Emirates in the past three years.

Every day, Israelis save time and money by doing something they couldn't do for 70

years. They fly over the Arabian Peninsula to destinations in the Gulf, India, the Far East, Australia.

The Abraham Accords ushered in another dramatic change.

It brought Arabs and Jews closer together.

We see it in the frequent Jewish weddings in Dubai, in the dedication of a Torah scroll in a synagogue in Bahrain, in the visitors flocking to the museum of Moroccan Judaism in Casablanca. We see it in lessons that are given to Arab students about the Holocaust in the UAE.

There's no question, the Abraham Accords heralded the dawn of a new age of peace.

But I believe that we are at the cusp of an even more dramatic breakthrough: an historic peace with Saudi Arabia.

Such a peace will go a long way to ending the Arab-Israeli conflict. It will encourage other Arab states to normalize relations with Israel. It will enhance the prospects of peace with the Palestinians. It will encourage a broader reconciliation between Judaism and Islam, between Jerusalem and Mecca, between the descendants of Isaac and the descendants of Ishmael.

All these are tremendous blessings.

Two weeks ago, we saw another blessing already in sight. In the G20 Conference, President Biden, Prime Minister Modi, and European and Arab leaders announced plans for a visionary corridor that will stretch across the Arabian Peninsula and Israel.

It will connect India to Europe with maritime links, rail links, energy pipelines, fiber-optic cables.

This corridor will bypass maritime chokepoints and dramatically lower the costs of goods, communication and energy for over two billion people.

What a historic change for my country!

You see, the Land of Israel is situated on the crossroads between Africa, Asia and Europe. And for centuries, my country was repeatedly invaded by empires passing through it in their campaigns of plunder and conquest elsewhere.

But today, as we tear down walls of enmity, Israel can become a bridge of peace and prosperity between these continents.

Peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia will truly create a new Middle East.

So understand the magnitude of the transformation that we seek to advance. Let me show you a map of the Middle East in 1948, the year Israel was established.

Here is Israel in 1948. It's a tiny country, isolated, surrounded by a hostile Arab world.

In our first 70 years we made peace with Egypt and Jordan. And then in 2020, we made the Abraham Accords, peace with another four Arab states

Now look at what happens when we make peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

The whole Middle East changes. We tear down the walls of enmity. We bring the possibility of peace to this entire region.

But we do something else.

You know, a few years ago I stood here with a red marker to show the curse, a great curse, the curse of a nuclear Iran. But today, I bring this marker to show a great blessing. The blessing of a new Middle East, between Israel, Saudi Arabia and our other neighbours.

We will not only bring down barriers between Israel and our neighbors. We'll build a new corridor of peace and prosperity that connects Asia through the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, to Europe.

This is an extraordinary change, a monumental change, another pivot of history.

As the circle of peace expands, I believe that a real path towards a genuine peace with our Palestinian neighbors can finally be achieved.

But there's a caveat. It has to be said here forcefully. Peace can only be achieved if it is based on truth. It cannot be based on lies. It cannot be based on endless vilification of the Jewish people.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas must stop spreading the horrible antisemitic conspiracies against the Jewish people and the Jewish state. He recently said that Hitler wasn't an antisemite. You can't make this up. But he did. He said that.

The Palestinian Authority must stop glorifying terrorists. They must stop its ghoulish pay-to-slay policy of giving money to Palestinian terrorists for the murder of Jews. This is all outrageous. It must stop for peace to prevail.

Antisemitism must be rejected wherever it appears, whether on the left or on the right, whether in the halls of universities or in the halls of the United Nations.

For peace to prevail the Palestinians must stop spewing Jew-hatred and finally reconciliation themselves to the Jewish state. By that I mean not only to the existence of

the Jewish state but to the right of the Jewish people to have a state of their own in their historic homeland, the Land of Israel.

And let me tell you, the people of Israel yearn for a genuine peace. I yearn for such a peace.

As a young soldier over half a century ago, my comrades and I in Israel's Special Forces faced mortal danger on many fronts, on many battlefields. From the warm waters of the Suez Canal to the frozen slopes of Mount Hermon, from the banks of the Jordan river to the tarmac of Beirut airport.

These experiences and other experiences taught me the cost of war.

A fellow soldier was killed next to me. Another died in my arms. I buried my older brother.

Those who have personally suffered the curse of war can best appreciate the blessing of peace.

There are many hurdles on the path of peace. There are many hurdles on the extraordinary path to peace that I've just described.

But I am committed to doing everything I can to overcome those hurdles, to forge a better future for Israel and all the peoples in our region.

Two days ago, I discussed this vision of peace with President Biden.

We share the same optimism for what can be achieved. And I deeply appreciate his commitment to seize this historic opportunity.

The United States of America is indispensable in this effort.

Just as we achieved the Abraham Accords with the leadership of President Trump, I believe we can achieve peace with Saudi Arabia with the leadership of President Biden.

Working together with the leadership of Crown Prince Muhammed Bin Salman, we can shape a future of great blessings for all our peoples.

Now you know, Ladies and Gentlemen, you know there's a fly in this ointment, because rest assured, the fanatics ruling Iran are will do everything they can to thwart this historic peace.

Iran continues to spend billions to arm its terror proxies. It continues to extend its terror tentacles in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, South America, even North America.

They even tried to assassinate the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

They even tried to assassinate the National Security Advisor of the United States of America. This tells you all you need to know about Iran's murderous intentions and Iran's murderous nature.

Iran continues to threaten international shipping lanes, hold foreign nationals for ransom and engage in nuclear blackmail.

Over the past year, its murderous goons have killed hundreds and arrested thousands of Iran's brave citizens.

Iran's drones and missile program threaten Israel and our Arab neighbors. And Iran's drones have brought and bring death and destruction to innocent people in the Ukraine.

Yet the regime's aggression is largely met by indifference in the international community.

Eight years ago, the Western powers promised that if Iran violated the nuclear deal, the sanctions would be snapped back.

Well, Iran is violating the deal. But the sanctions have not been snapped back.

To stop its nuclear ambitions, this policy must change.

Sanctions must be snapped back and above all, Iran must face a credible military threat.

As long as I am prime minister of Israel, I will do everything in my power to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons.

Equally, we should support the brave women and men of Iran who despise this regime and yearn for freedom, who've gone out bravely on the sidewalks of Tehran and Iran's other cities and face death.

It is the people of Iran, not their oppressors, who are our real partners for a better future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Whether our future will prove to be a blessing or a curse will also depend on how we address perhaps the most consequential development of our time, the rise of artificial intelligence.

The AI revolution is progressing at lightning speed.

It took centuries for humanity to adapt to the agricultural revolution.

It took decades to adapt to the industrial revolution.

We may have but a few years to adapt to the AI revolution.

The perils are great and they are before us: the disruption of democracy, the manipulation of minds, the decimation of jobs, the proliferation of crime and the hacking of all the systems that facilitate modern life.

Yet even more disturbing, is the potential eruption of AI-driven wars that could achieve an unimaginable scale.

Behind this perhaps looms an even greater threat, once the stuff of science fiction: that self-taught machines could eventually control humans instead of the other way around.

The world's leading nations, however competitive, must address these dangers.

We must do so quickly and we must do so together.

We must ensure that the promise of an AI utopia does not turn into an AI dystopia.

We have so much to gain.

Imagine the blessings of finally cracking the genetic code, extending human life by decades and dramatically reducing the ravages of aging.

Imagine healthcare tailored to each individual's genetic composition and predictive medicine that prevents diseases long before they occur.

Imagine robots helping to care for the elderly.

Imagine the end of traffic jams with self-driving vehicles on the ground, below the ground and in the air.

Imagine personalized education that cultivates each person's full potential throughout their lifetime.

Imagine a world with boundless clean energy and natural resources for all nations.

Imagine precision agriculture and automated factories that yield food and goods in an abundance that ends hunger and want.

I know this sounds like a John Lennon song, but it could all happen.

Imagine that we can achieve the end of scarcity, something that eluded humanity for all history.



It's all within our reach. And here's something else within our reach.

With AI we can explore the heavens as never before and extend humanity beyond our blue planet.

For good or bad, the developments of AI will be spearheaded by a handful of nations.

And my country Israel is already among them.

Just as Israel's technological revolution provided the world with breathtaking innovations, I am confident that AI developed by Israel will once again help all humanity.

I call upon world leaders to come together to shape the great changes before us, but to do so in a responsible and ethical way.

Our goal must be to ensure that AI brings more freedom and not less, prevents wars instead of starting them, and ensures that people live longer, healthier, more productive and peaceful lives. It's in our reach.

As we harness the powers of AI, let us always remember the irreplaceable value of human intuition and wisdom.

Let us cherish and preserve the human capacity for empathy which no machine can replace.

Thousands of years ago, Moses presented the children of Israel with a timeless and universal choice, "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse."

May we choose wisely between the curse and the blessings that stand before us this day.

Let us harness our resolve and our courage to stop the curse of a nuclear Iran and roll back its fanaticism and aggression.

Let us bring forth the blessings of a new Middle East that will transform lands once ridden with conflict and chaos into fields of prosperity and peace.

And may we avoid the perils of AI by combining the forces of human and machine intelligence to usher in a brilliant future for our world, in our time and for all time".

Source: <https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/event-un220923>