



YITZHAK RABIN CENTER  
מרכז יצחק רבין

## **“I, Military I.D. Number 30743, Yitzhak Rabin”**

**Address by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to the United States Congress**

**Washington, D. C.**

**July 26, 1994**

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, members of Congress, Your Majesty the King of Jordan,  
Shalom.

Each year on Memorial Day for the Fallen in Israel's Wars, I go to the cemetery on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem. Facing me are the graves and headstones, the colorful flowers blooming on them - and thousands of pairs of weeping eyes. I stand there, in front of that large silent crowd, and read in their eyes the words of "The Young Dead Soldiers" – as Archibald MacLeish entitled the poem from which I take these lines:

"They say: Whether our lives and our deaths were for peace and a new hope, or for nothing, we cannot say; it is you who must say this."

Ladies and gentlemen, we have come from Jerusalem to Washington because it is we who must say – and we are here to say – it is peace we dream. It is peace we desire.

With me here in this House today are my partners in this great dream. Here with me, here with you, are:

- Amiram Kaplan, whose first brother was killed in an accident, whose second brother was killed in pursuit of terrorists, whose third brother was killed in war, and whose parents died of heartbreak. And today he is a seeker of peace.

- Moshe Sasson, who, together with his father, was an emissary to the talks with King Abdallah and to other missions of peace. Today he is also an emissary of peace.
- A classmate of mine, Chana Rivlin of Kibbutz Gesher, which faces Jordan, who endured bitter fighting and lost a son in war. Today she looks out her window onto Jordan and wants the dream of peace to come true.
- Avraham Daskal, 90 years old, who worked for the Electric Company in Trans-Jordan and was privileged to attend the celebrations marking King Hussein's birth. He is hoping for peace in his lifetime.
- Dani Matt, who fought the Jordanians in the War of Independence, was taken prisoner-of-war, and devoted his life to the security of the State of Israel. He hopes that his grandchildren will never know war.
- Mrs. Penina Herzog, whose husband wove the first threads of political ties with Jordan.

With us here in this hall are:

- Mr. Gabi Kadosh, from Eilat, which touches on the frontier with Jordan and will be a focus of joint tourism.
- Mr. Shimon Cahaner, who fought against the Jordanians, memorializes his fallen comrades, and hopes that they will have been the last to fall.
- Mr. Talal al-Krienawi, a representative of the Bedouins in Israel, who look forward to renewing the friendship with their brothers in Jordan.
- Mr. David Coren, a member of a kibbutz which was captured by the Jordanians in 1948, who awaits the day when the borders will be open.
- Dr. Asher Susser, a scholar who has done research on Jordan throughout his adult life.
- Dr. Sharon Regev, whose father was killed while pursuing terrorists in the Jordan Valley and who yearns for peace with all his heart.

Here they are before you, people who never rejoiced in the victories of war, but whose hearts are now filled with joy in peace.

I have come here today from Jerusalem on behalf of those thousands of bereaved families, though I have not asked their permission. I stand here on behalf of the parents who have buried their children; and of the children who have no fathers; and of the sons and daughters who are gone, but return to us in our dreams. I stand here today on behalf of those youngsters who wanted to live, to love, to build a home.

I have come from Jerusalem in the name of our children, who began their lives with great hope – and are now names on graves and memorial stones, old pictures in albums, fading clothes in closets. Each year as I stand before the parents whose lips chant the Kaddish, the Jewish memorial prayer, MacLeish's words echoing the plea of the young dead soldiers ring

in my ears: "They say: We leave you our deaths. Give them their meaning."

Let us give them meaning. Let us make an end to bloodshed. Let us make true peace. Let us today be victorious in ending war.

Ladies and gentlemen, the debate goes on: Who shapes the face of history – leaders, or circumstances? My answer to you is, we all shape the face of history. We, the people. We, the farmers behind our plows, the teachers in our classrooms, the doctors saving lives, the scientists at their computers, the workers on the assembly lines, the builders on their scaffolds.

We, the mothers blinking back tears as our sons are inducted into the army; we, the fathers who stay awake at night worried and anxious for our children's safety. We, Jews and Arabs. We, Israelis and Jordanians. We, the people, we shape the face of history. And we, the leaders, hear the voices and sense the deepest emotions and feelings of the thousands and the millions, and translate them into reality.

If my people did not desire peace so strongly, I would not be standing here today. And I am sure that if the children of Amman, and the soldiers of Irbid, the women of Salt and the citizens of Aqaba did not seek peace, our partner in this great quest, the King of Jordan, would not be here now, shaking hands, calling for peace.

We bear the responsibility. We have the power to decide. And we dare not miss this great opportunity. For it is the duty of leaders to bring peace and well-being to their peoples. We are graced with the privilege of fulfilling this duty for our peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen, the complex relations between Israel and Jordan have continued for a generation now. Even today, so many years later, we carry with us good memories of the special ties between your country, Your Majesty, and mine, and we carry with us the grim reminders of the times we found ourselves at war.

We remember the days of your grandfather, the King, who sought avenues of peace with the heads of the Jewish people and the leaders of the young State of Israel.

There is much work before us. We face psychological barriers. We face genuine practical problems. Walls of hostility have been built on the River Jordan which runs between us. You in Amman and we in Jerusalem must tear down those barriers and walls, must solve those concrete problems.

Yesterday we took a giant step towards a peace which will embrace it all: borders and water, security and economics, trade without boycotts, tourism, the environment, and diplomatic relations. We want a peace between human beings.

Your Majesty, beyond the ceremonies, after the festivities, we will move on to the negotiations. They will not be easy. But when they are completed, a wonderful, common future awaits us. The Middle East, the cradle of the great monotheistic civilizations – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the Middle East, which was a valley of the shadow of death, will be a place where it is a pleasure to live.

Your Majesty, we live on the same stretch of land. The same rain nourishes our soil; the same hot wind parches our fields. We find shade under the same fig tree, and savor the fruit of the same green vine. We drink from the same well, and the laughter of a baby in Amman can wake the sleeping citizens of Jerusalem. Only a 70-minute journey separates these cities. Seventy minutes – and 46 years. And just as we have been great enemies, so can we be good neighbors.

Your Majesty, we have both seen a lot in our lifetime. We have both seen too much suffering. What will you leave to your children? What will I leave to my grandchildren? I don't have any assets. I have only dreams: to build a better world – a world of understanding and harmony, a world in which it is a joy to live. This is not asking too much.

Your Majesty, the State of Israel thanks you – for accepting our hand in peace; for your political wisdom and courage; for planting new hope in our hearts, in the hearts of your subjects, and the hearts of all peace-loving people. And I know that you enjoy the highest esteem of the United States – this great America which is helping the bold to make a peace of the brave.

I would like to thank, first, President Clinton, and the former presidents of the United States, the members of the administrations over the years, Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, distinguished representatives of the American people, and you, the wonderful people of America.

No words can express our gratitude to you for the years of your generous support, understanding and cooperation, which are all but beyond compare in modern history.

Thank you, America.

Your Majesty, tomorrow I shall return to Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Israel and the heart of the Jewish people. Lining the road to Jerusalem are rusting hulks of metal – burnt out, silent, cold. They are the remains of convoys which brought food and medicine to the war-torn and besieged city of Jerusalem 46 years ago. For many of Israel's citizens, their story is one of heroism, part of a national legend.

For me and for my comrades-in-arms, every scrap of cold metal lying there by the wayside is a bitter memory. I remember, as though it were just yesterday, the youngsters who died inside those metal heaps. Their screams of pain still echo in my ears. In my mind's eye, I can still see the blood draining out of their bodies. And I am still haunted by the deathly silence which followed.

I remember them. I was their commander in war. For them this ceremony has come too late. What endures are their children, their comrades, their legacy.

And I, I.D. Number 30743, Retired Lieutenant-General Yitzhak Rabin, a soldier in the Israel Defense Forces, and a soldier in the army of peace; I, who sent regiments into the fire and soldiers to their deaths, I say to you, Your Majesty, the King of Jordan, and I say to you, American friends:

Today we are embarking on a battle that has no dead and no wounded, no blood and no anguish. This is the only battle that is a pleasure to wage – the battle for peace.

Tomorrow, on the way up to Jerusalem, thousands of flowers will cover the remains of those rusting armored vehicles, the ones that never made it to the city. Tomorrow, from those silent metal heaps, thousands of flowers will smile to us – "Shalom," peace.

In the Bible, our Book of Books, peace is mentioned, in its various idioms, 237 times. In the Bible, from which we draw our values and our strength, in the Book of Jeremiah, we find a lamentation for Rachel the Matriarch. It reads: "Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears: for their work shall be rewarded, says the Lord."

We will not refrain from weeping for those who are gone. But on this summer day in Washington, far from home, we sense that our work will be rewarded, as the prophet foretold.

The Jewish tradition calls for a blessing on every new tree, every new fruit, every new season. Let me conclude with the ancient Jewish blessing that has been with us in exile, and in Israel, for thousands of years:

"Blessed are You, O Lord, who has preserved us, and sustained us, and enabled us to reach this time."

God bless the peace.