



Eulogies, Yitzhak Rabin's Funeral
November 5, 1995
Mt. Herzl, Jerusalem

The President of the United States of America, Bill Clinton

Lea, the Rabin children and grandchildren and other family members, President Weizman, Acting Prime Minister Peres, members of the Israeli government and the Knesset, distinguished leaders from the Middle East and around the world, especially His Majesty King Hussein for those remarkable and wonderful comments, and President Mubarak for taking this historic trip here, and to all the people of Israel:

The American people mourn with you in the loss of your leader, and I mourn with you, for he was my partner and friend. Every moment we shared was a joy because he was a good man and an inspiration, because he was also a great man.

Lea, I know that too many times in the life of this country you were called upon to comfort and console the mothers and the fathers, the husbands and the wives, the sons and the daughters who lost their loved ones to violence and vengeance. You gave them strength. Now, we here, and millions of people all around the world, in all humility and honor, offer you our strength. May God comfort you among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Yitzhak Rabin lived the history of Israel. Throughout every trial and triumph, the struggle for independence, the wars for survival, the pursuit of peace, and in all he served on the front lines. This son of David and of Solomon took up arms to defend Israel's freedom and lay down his life to secure Israel's future. He was a man completely without pretenses; all of his friends knew that. I read that in 1949 after the War of Independence, David Ben-Gurion sent him to represent Israel at the armistice talks at Rhodes and he had never before worn a necktie and did not know how to tie the knot. So, the problem was solved by a friend who tied it for him before he left and showed him how to preserve the knot, simply by loosening the tie and pulling it over his head. Well, the last time we were together, not two weeks ago, he showed up for a black tie event, on time but without the black tie. And so he borrowed a tie and I was privileged to straighten it for him. It is a moment I will cherish as long as I live.

To him, ceremonies and words were less important than actions and deeds. Six weeks ago, as the King and President Mubarak will remember, we were at the White House for the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement, and a lot of people spoke. I spoke, the King spoke, Chairman Arafat spoke, President Mubarak spoke, our foreign ministers all spoke, and finally Prime Minister Rabin got up to speak and he said, First, the good news – I am the last speaker." But he also understood the power of words and symbolism. "Take a look at this stage," he said in Washington. "The King of Jordan, the President of Egypt, Chairman Arafat, and us, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Israel, on one platform. Please, take a good, hard look. The sight



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you see before you was impossible, was unthinkable, just two years ago. Only poets dreamt of it and, to our great pain, soldiers and civilians went to their deaths to make this moment possible." Those were his words.

Today, my fellow citizens of the world, I ask all of you to take a good, hard look at this picture. Look at the leaders from all over the Middle East and around the world who have journeyed here today for Yitzhak Rabin, and for peace. Though we no longer hear his deep and booming voice, it is he who has brought us together again here, in word and deed, for peace.

Now it falls to all of us who love peace and all of us who loved him to carry on the struggle to which he gave life and for which he gave his life. He cleared the path and his spirit continues to light the way. His spirit lives on in the growing peace between Israel and her neighbors. It lives in the eyes of the children, the Jewish and Arab children who are leaving behind a past of fear for a future of hope. It lives on in the promise of true security. So, let me say to the people of Israel, even in your hour of darkness, his spirit lives on and so you must not lose your spirit. Look at what you have accomplished, making a once-barren desert bloom, building a thriving democracy in hostile terrain, winning battles and wars and now winning the peace, which is the only enduring victory.

Your prime minister was a martyr for peace, but he was a victim of hate. Surely, we must learn from his martyrdom that if people cannot let go of the hatred of their enemies, they risk sowing the seeds of hatred among themselves. I ask you, the people of Israel, on behalf of my nation that knows its own long litany of loss, from Abraham Lincoln to President Kennedy to Martin Luther King, do not let that happen to you. In the Knesset, in your homes, in your places of worship, stay the righteous course. As Moses said to the Children of Israel when he knew he would not cross over into the promised land, "Be strong and of good courage. Fear not, for God will go with you. He will not fail you. He will not forsake you."

President Weizman, Acting Prime Minister Peres, to all the people of Israel, as you stay the course of peace I make this pledge: neither will America forsake you. Legend has it that in every generation of Jews, from time immemorial, a just leader emerges to protect his people and show them the way to safety. Prime Minister Rabin was such a leader. He knew, as he declared to the world on the White House lawn two years ago, that the time had come, in his words, "to begin a new reckoning in the relations between people, between parents tired of war, between children who will not know war." Here in Jerusalem I believe, with perfect faith, that he was leading his people to that promised land.

This week, Jews all around the world are studying the Torah portion in which God tests the faith of Abraham, patriarch of the Jews and the Arabs. He commands Abraham to sacrifice Yitzhak. "Take your son, the one you love, Yitzhak." As we all know, as Abraham, in loyalty to God, was about to kill his son, God spared Yitzhak. Now God tests our faith even more terribly, for he has taken our Yitzhak. But Israel's



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covenant with God for freedom, for tolerance, for security, for peace – that covenant must hold. That covenant was Prime Minister Rabin's life work. Now we must make it his lasting legacy. His spirit must live on in us.

The Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for mourning, never speaks of death, but often speaks of peace. In its closing words, may our hearts find a measure of comfort and our souls, the eternal touch of hope. "Ya'ase shalom bimromav, hu ya'ase shalom aleinu, ve-al kol Israel, ve-imru, amen."

Shalom, haver.