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## NOW THAT WE HAVE SIGNED: HOW TO SECURE THE PEACE

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**How Do We Get to a Fair Peace? / The Real Possibility for Peace / Have We Given Away Too Much Too Soon? / Between the Highest Hopes and the Bleakest Visions / Jordan: Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution / Israel's Need to be Loved / Security Means Protection Against Worst-Case Scenarios**

### How Do We Get to a Fair Peace?

The prospects for peace between Israel, the Palestinians and Jordan are as exciting as they are unexpected. They are also a bit frightening. The morning after the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Rabin and Arafat on the White House lawn, all of us awakened to the realities of how vague they are and how difficult it is likely to be to fill them with content acceptable to all sides. Many sensible Israelis, themselves supporters of the peace process, are asking the question: Did Israel give away too much? Did the agreement change the terms of the negotiation to Israel's disadvantage? I am confident that many Palestinians are asking the same thing, even though it was Israel that stepped in and rescued Arafat from the political depths to which he had sunk and did what only it could have done, bringing him to the White House and giving his people real hope.

The Palestinians now appear to be willing to cooperate with Israel, at least insofar as necessary to give them a political foothold west of the Jordan

river which they anticipate expanding in relatively short order. The Israeli government is also committed to making the agreement work and, having taken the decisive step, will undoubtedly do all that it can — perhaps too much in the eyes of many in the Israeli public — to make it work.

### The Real Possibility for Peace

Like so many other Jews in Israel and outside, how I hope and pray that we have signed a declaration of principles for peace, that the long quarrel between the Palestinian Arabs and the Jews has ended, and that we are now on a path toward peace and cooperation. As I read the final text of the agreement, I see that, at least on the surface, it offers every possibility of being just that, the opening of a new page in the history of this strife-torn land that will enable us all to achieve the prophetic dream of living under our own vines and fig trees in peace. Yet sobriety and logic suggest that it is open to other interpretations as well. We would be well warned to pay heed and search for

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ways to deal with those interpretations, even as we move down the welcoming path of peace, so that we all will get that peace. We must make every reasonable and prudent effort to succeed and to make any pessimistic predictions come to naught.

### **Have We Given Away Too Much Too Soon?**

Have we given away too much too soon? We all talk about starting with the Gaza District (that few in Israel seem to want to keep in any case) and Jericho (whose boundaries are themselves undefined), which seems so far away. Yet, under the terms of the signed agreement, by the end of July, after the elections for the new Palestinian Governing Council, the Palestinians appear to acquire jurisdiction over all of the territories except for what Israel reserves for security and the settlers. We read of their receiving only five middle-range functions, but then there is the passage that says "and others that may be given them."

Matters get problematic. After initial statements that no settlements should pass under Palestinian jurisdiction during the interim period, in an interview on Kol Israel on October 25th, Yitzhak Rabin made an amendment that went unnoticed by his interviewer. He said that no Israeli settlements in the Jericho area will be placed under Palestinian jurisdiction, but that in Gaza it will be different. What does that mean? Is this another change in policy or are we being led step by step to hear about decisions made before but concealed from us.

Perhaps I am mistaken, but it seems to me that the paragraphs in the declaration on required Israel-Palestinian cooperation, that are not only for the interim period but will shape the final settlement, are reduced from the draft agreement. Right now it seems that we do have to cooperate, but is there an equal or commensurate give and take?

At every point there is ambiguity, and wherever there is ambiguity we can only live on hope. What the Knesset could not decide on its own initiative with regard to Israel, our leaders seem to have decided in secret negotiations which were conducted not by our political leadership but rather by lower-level politicians and even by some private citizens; that is, to revive the "green line" again. Is this the way to peace or to a continuing of the pressure upon us by other means, with us in a less advantageous position? Who knows?

### **Between the Highest Hopes and the Bleakest Visions**

So we are left hanging between great hopes and fear that the Third Jewish Commonwealth may not last

longer than the last Jewish Commonwealth, the Hasmonean state, which held out as an independent entity for no more than two generations — eighty years. We are already in the second generation of ours. And the threat comes for the same reason, not that we are not strong militarily, but because as statesmen we may not be up to the challenge. We have so many hopes and so little skepticism.

Moreover, the public relations campaign, while intense, is focusing on peripheral matters designed to appeal to the Israelis' (and Jews') desire to be accepted by the world. We hear that Malaysia and Indonesia are interested in having relations with us "soon," as if that, while nice, made a difference to our security. Our prime minister makes a lightening trip to Morocco to see the king. They hold a joint press conference, but there is no recognition, only a statement that it will come "soon." Jordan publicly signs an agreement, but it is only an agenda in which we, in effect, may have pledged to give them some territory, too. A peace is then negotiated in secret and now we hear from Jordan to the effect that, "Let us not be precipitous, let us not rush," that they, too, have concerns. Meanwhile, back in the territories, terrorist murders increase.

### **Jordan: Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution**

It turns out that Jordan may be more a part of the problem than of the solution. One sign of that is the recent alleged secret meeting between Jordan's King Hussein and Yitzhak Rabin soon after the signing with the PLO. Fifteen years after Anwar Sadat came to Jerusalem, less than a month after Rabin and Arafat shook hands on the White House lawn; and after Rabin and Peres and their Israeli entourage very publicly visited Morocco, King Hussein still persists on meeting secretly, reportedly in the waters off Aqaba. This is a repetition of a by now well-established pattern.

From the first, Israel has counted on Jordan to be the other pillar in its security arrangements in former British Mandatory Palestine, what for Israelis is the biblical land of the twelve tribes. Yet in every case, Jordan, while eager for Israel's (secret) support and protection against certain of its enemies, stays on the fence and is unable or unwilling to move things along toward peace and security in tandem with Israel. For many years this could be understood. King Hussein was not the Middle East's most famous survivor for nothing. But in the last few years Jordan's hesitations have cost it dear and today may not only cost it even more but may remove it from a game in which it desperately wants to be a principal player.

Israel already saw this Jordanian problem in 1967 when King Hussein led his country into the late Gamel Abdel Nasser's war with Israel despite Israeli pleas that he stay out. As a result, Jordan lost the entire West Bank. Still, Israel came to the Hashemite kingdom's aid in the years following when the PLO tried to start a civil war east of the Jordan and when Syria tried to invade the kingdom. Then in 1973 Jordan sat on the fence when Egypt and Syria attacked Israel and as a result gained no benefits for itself in a war fought on the premise that militarily the Arabs would lose but politically they would gain and so they did.

Both before 1973 and subsequently, Israel made many efforts to open the Jordanian option. The Israeli daily *Maariv* has listed twenty-one meetings between top Israelis and King Hussein since 1967, *prior* to the most recent Rabin-Hussein meeting, five with Rabin himself, three with Shimon Peres, and three with Rabin's predecessor, Yitzhak Shamir. Yet whenever we thought that the Jordanian option was going to bear fruit, the king would get cold feet.

We seem to be heading in the same direction once again, only this time Jordan has much more to lose. Almost with a stroke of a pen and certainly in a lightning move, Israel has found a potential ally in the Palestinians, at least operationally for tactical purposes. This new alliance threatens the old informal alliance between Israel and Jordan that sustained this part of the region since the 1940s when King Hussein's grandfather Abdullah led Jordan to independence and Israel achieved independence under David Ben-Gurion. But the Palestinians have done so because they need us, and Israel, tired of Jordan's obvious inability to deliver, has overcome its dislike of the PLO and its leader to deal with those whom it hopes can. If Jordan does not decide to move quickly and get off the fence now, it will find itself not only left out but threatened by a combination of its Palestinian majority and the new Palestinian entity west of the river, without Israel's protection.

The Palestinians, too, need Israel as a protection against Jordan and Israel needs both to assure that no separate Arab state arises west of the river but rather an entity linked constitutionally as well as organically (which it should be by virtue of the overwhelming Palestinian background of both populations) on both sides of the river. Israel would find that to its advantage as well in constructing proper shared-rule arrangements with its Arab neighbors to the east which are absolutely necessary for all the parties to attain peace. But sooner or later, and it looks now as if it will be

sooner, Israel will decide that in the absence of a Jordanian partner the Palestinians are a better bet.

One can understand King Hussein's hesitations since the future of his rule and that of his family is at stake, but if he does not enable Jordan to take its proper place in the new arrangements, Hashemite rule will certainly disappear in the near future by virtue of the forces released among the Palestinians. This way he has a good chance of building a Hashemite-Palestinian alliance that will offer him and his family the protection they seek with Israeli protection as a backstop.

### Israel's Need to be Loved

Meanwhile, on the Israeli side, as always, we trade away tangibles for symbols because as Jews, a people of principles, we are in love with those symbols. And then we even avoid enforcing the agreement on symbols — the Palestinians do not change their charter despite a commitment to do so. Old Jewish neuroses assert themselves in policy-making. We so much want to be accepted and recognized and brought in the front door by our neighbors. For a few days we are able to have our radio and TV correspondents in Amman and we place such great importance on it. While they are there they are told, "Take it easy," and Jordan begins to raise the ante of its demands. We are again the center of the communications network in our region, at least momentarily, but at what price? Then the reporters themselves are given broad hints by the Jordanian authorities that it is time to leave. And they leave.

How can a people with this attitude conduct proper negotiations, especially when the most active negotiators for Israel seem to be committed in advance to the idea of a Palestinian state as the only fair solution, even more so than many of their Arab counterparts? Sometimes it seems as if we are like a big puppy dog, our tail wagging frenetically as we jump on those with whom we wish to make friends, begging for a bit of affection. Not surprisingly, those on whom we jump assess the situation immediately and make us pay for every crumb that they give us.

Suddenly the divide between Israeli and American Jewish leaders, that everyone said had been growing, disappears as both groups embrace their Arab counterparts. That is very nice. It is one of our nice qualities to be so accepting, but we hope that we are being embraced back. Will we continue to be, when the Arabs see how we will embrace them in any case? Puppy dogs, like children, can conceal nothing and it is only natural that the objects of their attention will respond accordingly when they have their interests and demands

as well.

I have no complaints toward the Palestinians or other Arabs for acting as they have been in the negotiations. That is fair enough. Any sensible party would do the same. My complaint is directed at our side for not making certain that there is tit for tat.

This is an old theme in Jewish history. Even as we absorbed the news on the peace front, we were subjected to a new barrage on the visit of Israel's Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, Israel Lau, to the Vatican. There he saw the pope and maybe even got a promise of Vatican diplomatic recognition for Israel "soon." Why should we care? Why should this excite us so much? Why do we lower our pride so that the other side can dangle us in the air? What can we gain except another symbol? So the radio interviews the Reverend Professor Marcel Dubois, the Catholic philosopher with a permanent appointment with the Hebrew University, who lectures us on the need to provide a just solution for the Arabs to make the pope happy.

Perhaps Providence will smile on us and we will negotiate the agreement to which we are now bound in a satisfactory manner. That clearly is possible. We even see many signs of good will on the Arab side. Why not? They never expected to get what they are getting from us. And it may work.

### **Security Means Protection Against Worst-Case Scenarios**

If the proposed peace will save Jewish lives, I, for one, am prepared to argue for it with all of its dangers. The proposed peace can become genuine if our security interests are appropriately safeguarded, but if we begin to make the kinds of concessions that seem to be in the air, we merely guarantee another massive conflict, one that will not spare civilians any more than it will spare our soldiers.

It was hard enough scaling the Golan Heights in 1967. How much harder will it be when the sophisticated weaponry of today is brought into play. But our peacemaking leaders say, "We will secure all kinds of disarmament and demilitarization of the territory." How many of us remember the disarmament and demil-

itarization promised with the ceasefire of August 1970, when the Egyptians were enabled to return to the east bank of the Suez Canal. There were all sorts of promises and agreements, all violated the very next day. When Israel still had a chance to respond to them, it succumbed to outside pressures not to do so, with the result that three years later our air force could not prevent the Egyptian canal crossing because of the missiles the Egyptians had implanted on the east bank, which were only taken out by the air force after several days of battle and at real cost. Why should we assume that they or we would behave differently now? Security means being able to stand up against worst-case scenarios as well as against best-case ones.

Our leadership, political and military, seems to be more fearful of Iranian missiles than of Syrian tanks — this after every twentieth century war, including the war in Vietnam and the Gulf War, has demonstrated conclusively that wars cannot be won from the air without extensive ground troop involvement to capture and hold the ground involved. Aerial bombardment, ship to shore rockets, and scuds or whatever, make great drama, but do they really change the strategic situation when compared to tanks, artillery and infantry? We know the answer and it is not what our present leadership wants to hear.

We are now going down a path to which our leaders have committed us, and which the country has accepted, albeit with growing doubts. It is a path that, along with great promise, is fraught with dangers, some serious ones which are almost certain to tear at our very fabric, even if we are successful in confronting others. We can just pray that the Palestinians and the others of the Arab world really do want peace and that the people of Israel will be able to live in peace when all is said and done.

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