



משרד ראש הממשלה  
THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE  
مكتب رئيس الحكومة

HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION  
AND MEDIA ADVISER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

ראש מטה ההסברה  
ויועץ ראש הממשלה לתקשורת

*Transcription*

October 22, 2010

**Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Remarks at the Conference on the Future of the Jewish People at the Israel Museum**

Natan Sharansky is a hero of the Jewish people. He is also a great chess player, and of course I raise that because, aided by the late Tommy Lapid, I played with him the only game of chess – after the age of 15 – before the elections of 1999, I tied. I quit – in full glory. I have not played another game, until recently with him against Boris Galfand. We almost won – no, wait, we tied. A great hero of the Jewish people in many ways and important ways.

It's very good to be with all of you – Stu, a very thoughtful, committed thinker about our problem, the Jewish problem. And there are so many others here, close friends who, under the important work of Avinoam, bring together people who are thinking about the future of the Jewish state and the Jewish people, and they are inextricably bound. I don't think there's a future for the Jewish people without a future for the Jewish state. But I think the future of the Jewish state is important, is inextricably bound also with the commitment of the Jewish people to the nation-state of the Jews.

I want to thank you all for dedicating your valuable time, for considering the ways to enable the Jewish people to address the great challenges that we face in the first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a visionary who decided to dedicate his life to that very same purpose. Theodore Herzl saw the downtrodden condition of the Jewish people; he saw the storms that were gathering against them; and he laid out a clear path that he believed would enable them to weather the storms and direct their destiny to safer shores.

Herzl was right about many things. He was right about the need for a Jewish state and the need for a Jewish army to defend the state – like all states – against impending attacks. He was right about the dangers that loomed on the horizon. He was right that the restoration of the Jews, of Jewish sovereignty, in the Holy Land was not merely an age-old fantasy, but a practical goal that could be achieved in the present. But Herzl, I think, was too optimistic about the impact that the Jewish state would have on anti-Semitism.

He believed that the rebirth of the Jewish state would gradually put an end to anti-Semitism, and many of the early Zionists enthusiastically agreed with him. They thought that the establishment of a Jewish state would be an antidote to the age-old hatred of the Jews. And the irony is that over a century later, many now believe that the Jewish state is the cause of that hatred, and of course both these views are wrong. The Jewish state is neither the cause nor the cure for anti-Semitism.

The establishment of Israel and the remarkable return of the Jewish people to their homeland did not end hatred towards the Jews. It merely redirected it. The old hatred against the Jews as a people has been transformed into a new hatred against the Jewish state. In fact, the decades following the Holocaust, during which it was unacceptable to say certain things about Jews, can now be clearly seen as a notable exception, rather than a new norm. Over the last few decades, we have witnessed a return of that

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phenomenon that long marked our history: the demonization of Jews, the singling out of Jews, the denial of rights to Jews and Jews only.

What was once true of the Jewish people is now true of the Jewish state. In too many quarters in the international community, Israel is guilty until proven guilty. But while the Jewish state did not end the hatred towards the Jews, it provided the Jews the means to defend themselves against that hatred, and after 2,000 years of powerlessness, after being subjected to every evil under the sun, the Jews now have the power to defend themselves, and this remains the single greatest transformation of the Jewish condition in modern times.

That is why the key to securing the Jewish future is to secure a strong Jewish state. When planning for the coming decades, we have to recognize the great dualism that marks our national life in Israel. It's a dualism of remarkable progress and extraordinary threats. We live under a dual existence. Israel's achievements in the last 62 years are truly breathtaking. We are a global leader in high technology. Our scientists win Nobel Prizes. Our innovations in agriculture and medicine, in water and energy, in countless other fields, are changing the world. They are in every continent and many of the instruments that we use in modern life, especially in communication, in a lot of the medicines we take that cure illnesses – many of them originate in Zion and in Tel Aviv. And beyond science and technology, Israel is a fount of artistic creativity, with one of the most vibrant and dynamic societies on the globe. This is the positive side.

At the same time, and this may heighten the achievements that I've just described, we are a tiny country that faces threats not faced by any other nation. There is a sovereign nation not far from here that is developing nuclear weapons, atomic bombs, openly calling for our destruction, calling for wiping us off the map. Its terror proxies work every day to advance that goal. These threats have been heightened considerably by an unlikely coalition that has brought together the forces of militant Islam with morally confused fellow travelers in the free world, and both forces work to deny Israel the most elementary rights to defend itself.

The former works with missiles and suicide bombers; the latter through misnamed bodies like: the "UN Human Rights Commission", the "UN Human Rights Council", and their attempts to abuse the International Court of Justice. In the face of these challenges, we have to strengthen and accelerate Israel's progress, and we have to reduce the threats it faces.

A key to Israel's progress is to continue to free Israel's economy and unleash the remarkable talents of our people. If Israel is to remain strong, defense costs money – a lot of money. And it's going to cost more and more and more money. There is no way that Israel can meet the collective needs of its defense without unleashing its individual talents. The only way, if I can speak from a collective point of view, that we can meet our defense needs – and they are growing and they will grow more and more and more – is to have a remarkably entrepreneurial society. And if we are to remain strong in the global market, we have to be more competitive.

It's not only defense that we have to fund. We have to fund education, and we have an aging population. That's a blessing. We have one of the longest living populations in the world, and that needs a lot of money. It required, for example, pension reform – that we did. You heard of something that is going on in a certain country in Europe? Raising the retirement age from 60 to 62? We raised it to 67 – I think we're

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number one in the world. Why? Because we recognize there's no other way – no other way to fund our future. And as someone who led that reform, I can tell you, it's not easy. But we did many, many, many other reforms, all clustered together. I always thought as Finance Minister that it makes sense to maximize the number of reforms per national strike.

We have to have this growth to fund education, to fund our society, to fund our elders, to fund our defense. And we have done this. We have changed this country. If you came here 15 years ago, it was a different country. If you'll be here 15 years from now, it will be a different country. It used to be the country of that joke, you all know it: how do you make a small fortune in Israel? You come with a big fortune. Well, no longer. And the great challenge we have is to have people come with no fortune, who are here with no fortune, but they better themselves because we give them a good education. And then they can open up a small business, and that business can grow and become a great business. That's the challenge.

By the way, there is no other way to ensure a growing economy in the world. I've heard of the various theories that speak of the decline of entrepreneurship and initiative. There is no other way to stimulate economies. We're doing that, and we're very consistent, although we are part of a global economy. So our economic fortunes not only depend on us, they depend on the world. But what depends on us, we have to do, and we are going to do it.

The other key to maintaining our strength is to maintain and strengthen our identity, both inside and outside of Israel. Because I think that if we know our past, we strengthen our commitment to our common future. This is why I initiated the Heritage Plan, to strengthen identity within Israel, but also to bring in Jews from all over the world, especially young Jews, to partake in our common heritage which began here and continues here. And that is why I'll continue to support programs like Birthright and MASA that have connected an entire young generation of Jews with the State of Israel.

These are great missions: to continue and strengthen our progress as one of the world's most advanced societies. But equally, we have to work together to reduce the threats we face. Israel must do what it can to roll back the dangers of militant Islam, and at the same time to seize any opportunity to advance a secure peace. Both of these tasks are extremely difficult. Iran is vying for the leadership of militant Islam. It continues on its path towards developing nuclear weapons and its bid for regional hegemony. In addition to its threats to annihilate Israel, and its denial of the Holocaust, Iran is confronting the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq; it is taking over Lebanon; it is dominating Gaza; it is establishing beachheads in the Horn of Africa, Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen and other places; and it sends its tentacles into South America as well.

This is what Iran is doing without a nuclear weapon. Imagine what it will do with one. Imagine what its proxies will do under a nuclear umbrella. The international community, led by the United States, must constantly make clear in both word and deed that it will not permit Iran to develop nuclear weapons.

Advancing a secure peace is equally difficult. After 17 years of failure, people should be careful about assuming they have discovered a magic formula for instant success. See, I believe that peace is possible, but it must be based on a readiness for mutual compromise – not just the Israeli side making compromises, but the Palestinian side making some fundamental compromises as well. If we are to succeed, we must

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apply the lessons learned from the decade that saw a wave of terrorism and thousands of rockets – twelve thousand rockets actually – fired on our citizens.

For me, the two most important lessons are these: first, only when our peace partners are willing to recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish state will they truly be prepared to end the conflict and make a lasting peace with Israel; and second, only by having effective security arrangements on the ground, will Israel be able to defend the peace. And in our part of the world, the only peace that holds is a peace we can defend. Peace can also be unraveled. I often point out that we had peace – extraordinary relations – with two countries that we had trade relations with, security contacts, even military cooperation with one, the meeting of leaders, we even had 400,000 tourists go to one each year – that was Iran, and second is regrettably Turkey, and I hope we can improve our relations with Turkey.

The establishment of a formal peace treaty does not guarantee that the peace will last. You need security arrangements for two purposes: one, to ensure that the peace lasts; and second, to protect yourself if it doesn't. In order to protect yourself, you have to ensure that we don't have a repeat, for the third time, of a situation where we left, we vacated territory and Iran walked in. It walked into Lebanon, it walked into Gaza. We cannot allow Iran to walk into the hills dominating Tel Aviv and encircling Jerusalem. Because that will not merely mean the end of peace, it could put a strategic threat on the future of the Jewish state.

The conclusion I reach is not that we should not advance towards peace. It is that that peace arrangement must have, built into it, arrangements on the ground – concrete security arrangements that prevent this mistake from reoccurring a third time. I believe that this is the central expectation of the people of Israel who have suffered after great hopes – despite international guarantees, despite promises to the contrary – from the lack of such security arrangements and the lack of such stringent demands of our peace partners to begin a change and recognize the State of Israel and end the conflict with it.

As all of you know, Israel has a unique political system where one hears many different voices, official voices, about the prospects of peace, about what such a peace might look like and about many other things. But while I will continue to listen carefully to all these views, I am leading Israel down the path I believe in. I know there will be many bumps on the road, many obstacles to overcome, but I am confident that by uniting around our legitimate and necessary demands for mutual recognition and security, I think we can increase greatly the chances that we will achieve an historic compromise with our neighbors.

I would ask all of you today to help me forge that unity, both inside and outside Israel. The more our people speak with one voice about these principles that I think we can unite on – I think we must unite on – the more that voice will be heard clearly throughout the world.

This was very much the view of Herzl, who wanted to have a united voice – it didn't always succeed – not only about the dangers facing Zionism, but the dangers facing the world. That was true of Herzl and even more true of his great partner, Max Nordau. Nordau was one of the greatest thinkers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and for a decade he was one of the dominant intellectuals of the West. The great American writers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century who speak of him, speak of what a great influence he had on them. But Nordau was not successful in his great book, "Degeneration". He spoke about the impending rise of totalitarianism, of fascism and communism and what this will do to the world – not only to the Jews. He

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joined Herzl because he believed the Jews have to save themselves against these forces, but he was unable to alert the world to the danger, and the rest is history – world history and our history.

Today we're in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we have to alert the world to the dangers that we face – not only that we face, but that the world faces. And the dangers Israel faces is not from the rise of China and India, it's not the danger that America faces either, or the West as it's commonly known. That is not the great danger. I don't think it's a danger at all. The great danger is the fact that wedged right between East and West is the rise of radical Islam that knows no bound: to its ruthlessness and to its acquisition of the weapons of mass death, without any inhibition to their use. This is new. This is new in history, because in previous generations it was impossible to acquire a capacity for great destruction and sustain it for any length of time without having an advanced civilization.

Now, primitive societies, barbaric societies, societies that, in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, enslave women, mutilate them, deny human rights to their own citizens, promote terror worldwide and promote the most absurd doctrines – these societies can acquire nuclear weapons, missiles, rockets. This is new and this is a great, great danger to East and West alike.

I think it is important that we speak together with one voice while we advance our society and make it a model country. While we seek to pursue peace – a realistic peace, a secure peace – with our neighbors, we must also warn the world, East and West, about the danger to our common future of modernity and to our common civilization. This is how I think the Jewish people and the Jewish state can truly be a light unto the nations.

Thank you very much.

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