

**President Shimon Peres Addresses  
the AIPAC Policy Conference  
Washington, D.C., March 4, 2012**

As the President of the State of Israel I came here first and foremost to say on behalf of my people:

“Toda”, “Thank You”.

Thank you President Obama, for being such a good friend. Thank you AIPAC, for your dedication and excellence. It is great to be here. To be together. Strong and united.

I see old friends and new ones. I see many young faces. The future belongs to you. Israel loves you.

I am moved by your generous tribute. I stand here, before you, a hopeful man. Proud to be Jewish, Proud to be Israeli, Proud to be there at the birth of Israel, Proud to have served it for 65 years, proud of our alliance with the United States.

Israel, like America, was conceived as an idea, born in defiance of history; creating a new world by drawing on the values of the past and the innovations of the future.

Friends,

The restoration of Jewish statehood after two thousand years in exile – is a historic miracle.

We started as a doubt and wound up as a certainty. We had to fight six wars in six decades. We did not lose one. We never will. We cannot afford it. We had to defend ourselves. Self-defense is our right and obligation.

With little land, water or resources, Israel grew tenfold in population. Fifty-fold in gross domestic product. Israel's high-tech and innovation enriches the world its agriculture makes deserts green. Israel built new villages, new cities, new universities, new theatres and cultural centers. Our children are speaking the language of the prophets. Hebrew literature is flourishing. From a dispersed people we became a united democracy.

No day of war ever interrupted a day of democracy.

Dear Friends,

Permit me a personal note. Fate placed me in the eye of the storm. I was eleven years old when my beloved grandfather, Rabbi Tzvi Melzer, accompanied me to the train-station on my way to Israel. He hugged me and whispered in my ear only three words, "Shimon.... stay Jewish."

Those were his last words to me. I never saw him again.

In 1942, when the Nazis arrived to his village, they forced my Grandfather, together with the remaining Jews into the wooden synagogue and set it on fire. No one survived. Not one.

What remained was my Grandfather's legacy. His last words to me: "Stay Jewish."

Dear Friends,

I was privileged to work with the father of our nation, my mentor, David Ben-Gurion. For me, Ben Gurion's great leadership with my Grandfather's legacy became my compass.

That compass is comprised of four core values: Our moral code. Our pursuit of peace and security. Our quest for knowledge. Our alliance with America.

The moral code, the return to the Book and its values, enabled the Jewish people to survive, for four thousand years.

NOT because of quantity – because of quality. Not due to thousands of guns – but due to Ten Commandments. We are guided by the call of our Prophets, to me it means: To be just. To do justice. To never deny justice to others.

Dear Friends,

The pursuit of peace, for us, is not a passing opportunity it is a moral imperative. It is the tenet of our national security. To make peace, Israel must be strong. Let me assure you, Israel is strong.

Dear Friends,

The Middle East is undergoing its greatest storm. With horrible bloodshed in Syria, where a tyrant is killing his people, killing children. I admire the courage of the Syrian people. We wish them peace and freedom. In spite of the storm, we have to reach out to the young generation in the Arab world, to those who strive for freedom, democracy and peace. The Palestinians are our neighbors for life. Peace can and must be achieved. A peace based on:

► **A Two State Solution**

► **A Jewish state – Israel, an Arab state – Palestine.**

It was accepted by past and present Israeli Prime ministers and American presidents: Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama. The principle of the Two State Solution is a paramount Israeli interest.

We want to preserve an Israel that is Jewish, democratic and attractive. I meet from time to time with President Abbas and PM Fayyad. They need and want peace. I believe that peace is possible. They are our partners for peace. Not Hamas.

A peace that is a dream for both of us, is a nightmare for the Ayatollahs in Iran. Iran is an evil, cruel, morally corrupt regime. It is based on destruction. And is an affront to human dignity. Iran is the center, the sponsor, the financier of world terror. Iran is a danger to the entire world. It threatens Berlin as well as Madrid, Delhi as well as Bangkok. Not just Israel.

Iran's ambition is to control the Middle East, so it can control a major part of the world's economy. It must be stopped. And it will be stopped.

Israel experienced the horrors of war. It does not seek it. Peace is always our first option, but, if we are forced to fight, trust me.... we shall prevail.

President Obama is leading and implementing, an international complex and decisive policy, imposing economic and political sanctions against Iran. President Obama made it clear that the US will not permit Iran to become nuclear. That containment is not a sustainable policy; all options are on the table. The United States and Israel share the same goal – to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. There is NO space between us. Our message is clear: Iran will not develop a nuclear weapon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The quest for knowledge defines Jewish history. Judaism is a constant debate. It is about asking the right questions. It is about being a liberal and pluralistic society.

I believe Jews are never satisfied because they are always seeking new answers. A better tomorrow, Tikun Olam [*improving the world*].

I believe that the next decade will be the most scientific, the most dramatic chapter in human history. It will expose possibilities that today sound like science fiction. Its center will be brain research.

The more we shall know about ourselves, the more we shall be able to control ourselves. In a global world without a global government, self-control is vital.

Friends,

In a world of science and knowledge, the Jewish people and Israel have an exciting role to play. Much to contribute.

Ladies and Gentlemen, members of Congress,

America was, is, and will remain the indispensable leader of the free world. The indispensable friend of our people. Today more than ever, the world needs America.

I have had the privilege to meet all American Presidents in the last fifty years, Democrats and Republicans. I was strongly impressed by their deep commitment. Their care for Israel. That commitment was and is bipartisan.

Mr. President,

Members of the administration, members of congress on both sides of the aisle: we are forever grateful for your unwavering support of the unbreakable alliance between the US and Israel.

I first met President Barack Obama, our great friend, when he was a Senator from Illinois. I saw before me a born leader. His care and devotion to Israel's security were evident.

Mr. President,

I know your commitment to Israel is deep and profound. Under your leadership, security cooperation between the US and Israel has reached its highest level.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have a friend in the White House. He reflects the values that make America great and make Israel secure. Thank you President Obama on behalf of my people.

Soon I will return home. Great challenges and promising opportunities await us. Thanks to your love and commitment and America's great friendship. I return home, much more hopeful, much more encouraged.

Thank you very much,  
God Bless America,  
God Bless Israel.  
Shalom.

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