

Remarks at an Arrival Ceremony in Tel Aviv, Israel

March 20, 2013

Shalom. President Peres, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and most of all, to the people of Israel: thank you for this incredibly warm welcome. This is my third visit to Israel, so let me just say *tov lihiyot shuv ba-aretz*.

I'm so honored to be here as you prepare to celebrate the 65th anniversary of a free and independent State of Israel. Yet I know that in stepping foot on this land, I walk with you on the historic homeland of the Jewish people.

More than 3,000 years ago, the Jewish people lived here, tended the land here, prayed to God here. And after centuries of exile and persecution, unparalleled in the history of man, the founding of the Jewish State of Israel was a rebirth, a redemption unlike any in history.

Today, the sons of Abraham and the daughters of Sarah are fulfilling the dream of the ages to be masters of their own fate in their own sovereign state. And just as we have for these past 65 years, the United States is proud to stand with you as your strongest ally and your greatest friend.

As I begin my second term as President, Israel is the first stop on my first foreign trip. This is no accident. Across this region, the winds of change bring both promise and peril. So I see this visit as an opportunity to reaffirm the unbreakable bond between our nations, to restate America's unwavering commitment to Israel's security, and to speak directly to the people of Israel and to your neighbors.

I want to begin right now by answering a question that is sometimes asked about our relationship: Why? Why does the United States stand so strongly, so firmly with the State of Israel? And the answer is simple. We stand together because we share a common story: patriots determined to be a free people in our land, pioneers who forged a nation, heroes who sacrificed to preserve our freedom, and immi-

grants from every corner of the world who renew constantly our diverse societies.

We stand together because we are democracies. For as noisy and messy as it may be, we know that democracy is the greatest form of government ever devised by man.

We stand together because it makes us more prosperous. Our trade and investment create jobs for both our peoples. Our partnerships in science and medicine and health bring us closer to new cures, harness new energy, and have helped transform us into high-tech hubs of our global economy.

We stand together because we share a commitment to helping our fellow human beings around the world. When the earth shakes and the floods come, our doctors and rescuers reach out to help. When people are suffering, from Africa to Asia, we partner to fight disease and overcome hunger.

And we stand together because peace must come to the Holy Land. For even as we are clear eyed about the difficulties, we will never lose sight of the vision of an Israel at peace with its neighbors.

So, as I begin this visit, let me say as clearly as I can: the United States of America stands with the State of Israel because it is in our fundamental national security interest to stand with Israel, it makes us both stronger, it makes us both more prosperous, and it makes the world a better place.

That's why the United States was the very first nation to recognize the State of Israel 65 years ago. That's why the Star of David and the Stars and Stripes fly together today. And that is why I'm confident in declaring that our alliance is eternal. It is forever: *lanetzach*.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. at Ben Gurion Airport.