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The Ambassadors, Ministers, and *Chargés d'Affaires* of foreign governments entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Cabinet of the President of the United States.

The Members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States entered the Hall of the House of Representatives and took the seats reserved for them in front of the Speaker's rostrum.

At 11 o'clock and 9 minutes a.m., the Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms announced the Prime Minister of the State of Israel.

The Prime Minister of the State of Israel, escorted by the committee of Senators and Representatives, entered the Hall of the House of Representatives, and stood at the Clerk's desk.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

The SPEAKER. Members of the Congress, it is my great privilege, and I deem it a high honor and a personal pleasure to present to you His Excellency Shimon Peres, the Prime Minister of Israel.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, SHIMON PERES, PRIME MINISTER OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Prime Minister PERES. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, my very dear friends, I stand before you stunned and humbled. It was but a year ago that on this very podium there stood before you, in a partnership of hope, King Hussein and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. And Rabin is no more.

It was only 2 years ago that President Bill Clinton hosted Chairman Arafat and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and we all witnessed a historic handshake. And Yitzhak has gone.

Two weeks and twenty years ago Lyndon Baines Johnson stood on this very spot and said, "All I have, I would have given gladly not to be standing here today."

Mr. Speaker, all I have, I would have given gladly not to be standing here today. My senior partner is gone.

Now, he belongs to the ages. He will enter them as a great leader, as a great soldier, a captain of peace who was assassinated because he was right. That was the reason.

I shared with him days of worry and grief. I shared with him hours of reflec-

tion and decision. We complemented each other in a determined pursuit of the only objective worthy of the task bestowed upon us by the people of Israel: to carve a new era of security in peace, to build bridges across an Arab-Israeli divide, an impossible divide. And he, the captain, is no more.

You, dear friends, have honored him in life with an intimate, bipartisan friendship to the man, to the land, to the cause he represented. You have honored him in death with your unprecedented presence which moved our hearts.

May I tell you that the fact that the President, two former Presidents, a Secretary of State, two former Secretaries of State, the leaders of the Senate and the House and many of the Members came on this very sad day to stand at our side is an unforgettable experience in our life. We really thank you. It was great on your part; it will be unforgettable in our history.

Hence, I stand before you with one assignment: In the shadowy light of those candles, in the tearful eyes of our young generation, I heard their appeal, nay, the order, "Carry on. Carry on."

This is my task.

I stand before you with one overriding commitment: to yield to no threats, to stop at no obstacle in negotiating the hurdles ahead, in seeking security for our people, peace for our land and tranquility for our region. And in so doing, I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, for your support, and first and foremost, your moral support. That is what counts mostly.

Nothing but your own conscience is your guide. Your faith in the Almighty and the moral imperative that guides you.

Yitzhak and I were always firm believers in the greatness of America, in the ethic and generosity inherent in your history, in your people. For us, the United States of America is a commitment to values before an expression of might.

For us, the vast discovery of America is its Constitution even more than its continent, the Constitution enriched by its biblical foundation.

From our school days we remembered the proposal of John Adams that the imagery of ancient Israel captivated the Constitutional Congress in 1776.

We recalled Benjamin Franklin's idea to incorporate in the Great Seal of the new Confederation the image of Moses raising his staff, dividing the Red Sea.

We remembered Thomas Jefferson suggesting that the image of the children of Israel struggling through the wilderness, led by a pillar of cloud by day, by a pillar of fire by night, that this image be the symbol of the young Republic, to become the Great Republic.

History did not stop there. The cloud and the fire have accompanied the human experience in this, the most difficult century in the annals of mankind.

As the end of the 20th century is nearing, it could verily be described as

the American century, yes, the century of America.

America nurtured a way of life that has made competitive creativeness the engine of economic development practically in every corner of the world. The United States has built strength, has used strength to save the globe from three of its greatest menaces: the Nazi tyranny, the Japanese militarism, and the Communist challenge.

You did it. You brought freedom. You defended it.

Even in this very day, as Bosnia reels in agony, you offered a compass and a lamp to a confused situation like in the Middle East. Nobody else was able or was ready to do it.

You enabled many nations to save their democracies even as you strive now to assist nations to free themselves from their nondemocratic past.

Your sons and daughters fought many wars. Your great armies won many victories. Yet wars did not cause you to lose heart, just as triumphs did not corrupt your system.

America remains unspoiled because she has rejected the spoils of victory.

You have a great Constitution, a vast land, a pluralistic civilization. Israel is a small land, 47 years young, 4,000 years deep.

Thanks to the support you have given and to the aid you have rendered, we have been able to overcome wars and tragedies thrust upon us and feel today strong enough to take measured risks to wage a campaign for peace together with you.

Let me assure you that never shall we ask your sons and daughters to fight instead of us, just as we have never asked you to do so in the past. We shall do our task; we shall enjoy your support.

Indeed, even as I speak before you now, Israeli troops are parting from Palestinian towns and villages in a historic departure, intending never to return there as occupiers. We do not want to occupy anybody.

This, for us, is a victory of moral commitment and for the Palestinians a victory of self-respect. For the first time, they are governing themselves and we are governing ourselves too.

Nobody forced us to do so. Nobody forced us to take these measures, and Israel is neither weak nor afraid. Our choice was freely made.

What we have accomplished, in resonance of your own tradition, we have given, like you, preference to a biblical ethic. We are true to the old pages.

Yet like you, we have rejected the temptation to rule over another people, even though we possess the force to do so.

Before coming here, I visited King Hussein, a real friend of the United States. We discussed the possibilities of transforming the Jordan Rift Valley, which is in fact an elongated, extended desert, into a Tennessee Valley. We learned from you again.

In a single bold sweep, we are and remain resolved to turn back the desert,

to stop the war, and to end the hatred once and forever.

I then met with President Mubarak in a highly congenial atmosphere. We agreed to put aside certain bitter memories and to postpone certain disputed issues for a future date. We have time in the future to disagree; now we have to agree.

Then I met Chairman Arafat, and his expression of condolence had the ring of a sincere desire for peace. May I tell you that nothing convinced the Israeli people about the sincerity of the Arabs seeking peace more than the sympathy and condolence they expressed when they learned about the assassination of Rabin, a sad event, a revealing sentiment.

Arafat is engaged in the new realities of his people and he has conveyed to me the solemn promise to intensify his fight against terror, which is, today, as much a danger to him as it is to the peace we are committed together to achieve.

I, on my part, have promised to release prisoners in our custody, as we did agree, so as to enable them to participate in free elections scheduled for the first time in history, to take place on January 20, 1996.

As far as we are concerned, democracy, and that includes Palestinian democracy, is the best and probably the only guarantee for a real and durable peace. Freedom supports this.

I believe in this prospect. Three years ago, such a prospect would have been considered a fantasy; that was part of the accusation against me. Now reality is on our side.

All this would hardly have been attainable were it not for the American involvement and the support of those efforts. President Clinton and his administration, the leadership and the Members of the Congress, practically all of them, the American people at large, have made possible the dawn of peace to rise again over the ancient horizon, over the ancient skies of the Promised Land, to bring promise again to the land.

And by so doing, you have removed the terrifying prospect of evil hands grabbing hold of unconventional weapons.

Mr. Speaker, Members of Congress, international terrorism is a threat to us all. Fundamentalism with a nuclear bomb is the nightmare of our age. We have to stop it.

We understood that in order to ready ourselves to confront the new dangers, we would have to put a stop to the enmity with our neighbors. In our time, more than there are new enemies, there are new dangers. The dangers of our days are not confined to borders; they are common to all of us, Moslems, Christians, and Jews alike. Therefore, we have to try to achieve a comprehensive peace.

Peace with Syria and Lebanon, the two remaining adversaries on our borders, may well prove to be the greatest contribution to the construction of a

new Middle East, of a new era in the Middle East.

I must admit that the hurdles are many. We have to negotiate mountains of suspicion. We have to traverse chasms of prejudice. We have to find solutions to an array of genuinely conflicting interests. They are not artificial.

Israel, for its part, is ready to go, to try and do it.

In October next year Israel will go to elections. I here declare that the decision to strive for peace shall be pursued regardless of it. To win peace is more important than to win elections.

We shall try wholeheartedly, we shall try to forge the peace with Syria and Lebanon expeditiously so that before the curtain of the 20th century shall fall, we shall see, all of us, the emergence of a Middle East of peace.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, therefore, I would like to use this podium, with your permission, ladies and gentlemen, to turn to President Assad of Syria and say to him:

"Without forgetting the past, let us not look back. Let fingertips touch a new untested hope."

Let each party yield to the other, each giving consideration to the respective needs of the other, mutually so, him to us, we to him. Without illusion, but with resolve, we shall stand ready to make demanding decisions if you are, if Assad is.

We shall negotiate relentlessly until all gaps are bridged, if you are, if Assad is.

I believe we face a historic opportunity, perhaps of galloping pace. If we shall find the language of peace between us, we can bring peace to all of us. Surely nothing would capture the imagination of young people everywhere more than a gathering of all of us standing together and declaring, and when I say all of us, I mean all of the leaders of the Middle East, all the 20 of them, not one-by-one, but together, and declaring the end of war, the end of conflict, carrying the message to our forefathers and to our grandchildren that we are again, all of us, the sons and daughters of Abraham, living in a tent of peace again. We shall tell them, together as partners, we are going to build a new Middle East, a prosperous economy, that we are going to raise the standard of living, not the standard of violence. We have enough violence, not enough the-right-way-to-live.

What we are going to introduce is light and hope to our people, to their destinies.

Mr. Speaker, permit me a personal word. In my country I have shouldered almost every responsibility. I have tasted almost every title. I have served almost in every position. Today I wish only one thing: to bear the burden of peacemaking.

In the last moment of his life, we stood together to the very last moment, his happiest moment of life, Yitzhak Rabin stood in the Tel Aviv square, me standing on his side and

singing, he was singing the song of peace.

The singer, alas, is not with us. The song remains. You cannot kill the song of peace.

Now, distinguished Members of the Congress, I say it sincerely, that I have come here for your advice and consent. I hazard the thought that the world cannot permit itself to be without American leadership in these trying times. Not in the Middle East or in other places.

America, in my judgment, cannot escape what history has laid on your shoulders, on the shoulders of each of you. You cannot escape that which America alone can do. America alone can keep the world free and assist nations to assume the responsibility for their own fate.

Please continue. Go ahead and do it as you did for the whole century; the next century is awaiting your leadership was well.

In this spirit, I can do no better than quote what Yitzhak Rabin said to you when he stood on this rostrum a year ago and he said:

"No words can express our gratitude to you for the years of your generous support, understanding and cooperation which are all but beyond compare in modern history." And Then he said, "Thank you, America."

I, too, say it: Thank you, America, for what you are, for what you have been, for what you shall be. And in so doing, I shall conclude with a prayer:

May the Almighty spread His wings of loving kindness and His tabernacle of peace over the Land of Israel. May He grant His light and truth to all of the leaders of our region, to all of the leaders of America, to the leaders of our time. And You give peace in the land and eternal joy for its habitants.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

At 11 o'clock and 45 minutes a.m., the Prime Minister of Israel, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The assistant to the Sergeant at Arms escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The Members of the President's Cabinet.

The Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Ambassadors, Ministers, and Chargés d'Affaires of foreign governments.

JOINT MEETING DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The purpose of the joint meeting having been completed, the Chair declares the joint meeting of the two Houses now dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The House will continue in recess until 1 p.m.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 52 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 1 p.m.