

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
YITZHAK RABIN
PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

THE SOUTH LAWN

10:45 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Prime Minister and Mrs. Rabin, shalom.

Mrs. Ford and I are very delighted to welcome both of you to Washington, our good friends of many years, and we are delighted to see you on this occasion despite the weather.

We hope your visit here and across our Nation, Mr. Prime Minister, will renew many happy memories and deepen the relationship of our two countries. We are proud to have both of you as our guests.

As in the past, Mr. Prime Minister, we met today in a spirit of warm good will. Your visit gives me the opportunity to reaffirm, on behalf of all of the American people, the enduring friendship of our two countries, the traditional commitment of the United States to Israel's security and survival and the dedication of the United States to seek, with Israel's cooperation, a peaceful, comprehensive and just solution to the conflict in the Middle East.

The United States and Israel share a very deep devotion to democratic ideals; a special affinity as two kindred peoples and common moral and political values that flow from the great Judeo-Christian heritage.

Just as you and I have been friends for many years, Mr. Prime Minister, our two Nations are friends. For almost thirty years since and even before your independence, our two peoples have worked together in many fields. My strongest desire is that we continue to work together in the future. Today our cooperation is more necessary than ever before in the quest for an enduring peace in the Middle East.

In the agreements we have already achieved by working together, we have established a sound basis for the further movement toward an ultimate peace settlement. With statesmanship and courage, Mr. Prime Minister, you have taken the first steps.

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The wisdom and determination that you and your Nation have so amply displayed thus far will be required in even greater degree in the days ahead. Our tasks remain urgent and important. I know that the people of Israel yearn for peace. All of us share a great responsibility -- Israel, its Arab neighbors and the United States. Our task is to realize this goal together with realism and with justice. Let us seize this historic opportunity to help translate hopes into reality.

I welcome your visit, Mr. Prime Minister. We can in the next several days, deepen our mutual understanding and trust. We can help to advance the process of peace. We can enhance even further the unique friendship of our two countries. And if other nations also do their part, this year will be recorded in history as another year of steady progress toward the fulfillment of our common dream -- the peace that is so fervently desired throughout the Middle East and by the entire world.

Mr. Prime Minister, I look forward to our discussions and to the pleasure of your company. On behalf of all Americans, I extend our heartiest welcome to you and to Mrs. Rabin.

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PRIME MINISTER RABIN: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Mr. President, Mrs. Ford: My wife and I appreciate very much your personal welcome, especially on such a day. According to the Jewish tradition, rain means blessing.

It is a pleasure to be back in Washington and to see around me so many friends. My thanks go to you, Mr. President, for your invitation that enables me to meet with you to express to you respect and friendship.

I am looking forward to our talks for I know they will advance our common purpose. The purpose is peace -- peace in the world -- and more specifically peace between Israel and the Arab countries. Towards that end, the Government of Israel commits its energies.

Mr. President, when the history of this period will be written your name will be given a permanent place as the leader of the free world who led the struggle for a better, more decent and more peaceful world for people to live in. Your personal involvement in the cause for peace and stability in the Middle East has been untiring.

Your efforts have not been without results. Under your guidance America has played an indispensable role in helping to bring about what we all hope will prove to be the beginning of the peace process. We know that it is complex. We know that it is not without risks, but I want to assure you, Mr. President, that we, Israel, will continue to do all that can reasonably be done to help to move that process along.

Your friendship, your wisdom, the energy you devote for peace and the efforts you make for the welfare of my own democratic people move me to express to you our sincere gratitude.

I am told, Mr. President, that by your invitation I am the first head of Government to visit the United States in your Bicentennial year. This is a special honor for me -- it affords me the opportunity to bring a particular message of friendship to all communities across your great country, including the Jewish community with whom we have a profound historic spiritual tie.

The message I carry is "Shalom to America" on the occasion of your Bicentennial celebration. It is a celebration we are making in Israel, too. We do so because of the debt that Israel and the whole free world owes to this great country. We do so because of the spirit of liberty, peace and democracy that gave birth to free America 200 years ago and we do so because it is identical to the spirit that gave rebirth to my own free Israel 28 years ago.

Mr. President, I am deeply gratified for your invitation and hospitality which enables me to deliver this message to you personally.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. You have been very generous and I am most appreciative.