

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles, here today, is not so easy neither for myself, as a soldier in Israel's wars, nor for the people of Israel, not to the Jewish people in the Diaspora who are watching us now with great hope, mixed with apprehension. It is certainly not easy for the families of the victims of the wars, violence, terror, whose pain will never heal. For the many thousands who have defended our lives in their own, and even sacrificed their lives for our own for them, this ceremony has come too late. Today, on the eve of an opportunity for peace and perhaps an end of violence and wars we remember each and every one of them with everlasting love.

We have come from Jerusalem, the ancient and eternal capital of the Jewish people. We have come from an anguished and grieving land. We have come from a people, a home, a family, that has not known a single year not a single month in which mothers have not wept for their sons. We have come to try and put an end to the hostilities, so that our children, our children's children, will no longer experience the painful cost of war, violence and terror. We have come to secure their lives and to ease the sorrow and the painful memories of the past to hope and pray for peace.

Let me say to you, the Palestinians: We are destined to live together on the same soil, in the same land. We, the soldiers who have returned from battle stained with blood, we who have seen our relatives and friends killed before our eyes, we who have attended their funerals and cannot look into the eyes of their parents, we who have come from a land where parents bury their children, we who have fought against you, the Palestinians -

We say to you today in a loud and a clear voice: Enough of blood and tears. Enough. We have no desire for revenge. We harbor no hatred towards you. We, like you, are people people who want to build a home, to plant a tree, to love, to live side by side with you in dignity, in empathy, as human beings, as free men. We are today giving peace a chance, and saying again to you: Enough. Let us pray that a day will come when we all will say: Farewell to the arms.

We wish to open a new chapter in the sad book of our lives together a chapter of mutual recognition, of good neighborliness, of mutual respect, of understanding. We hope to embark on a new era in the history of the Middle East. Today, here in Washington, at the White House, we will begin a new reckoning in relations between peoples, between parents tired of war, between children who will not know war.

President of the United States, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our inner strength, our high moral values, have been derived for thousands of years from the Book of Books, in one of which, Koheleth, we read:

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die;

A time to kill, and a time to heal;

A time to weep and a time to laugh;

A time to love, and a time to hate;

A time of war, and a time of peace.'

Ladies and Gentlemen, the time for peace has come.

In two days, the Jewish people will celebrate the beginning of a new year. I believe, I hope, I pray, that the new year will bring a message of redemption for all peoples: a good year for you, for all of you. A good year for Israelis and Palestinians. A good year for all the peoples of the Middle East. A good year for our American friends, who so want peace and are helping to achieve it, for Presidents and members of previous administrations, especially for you, President Clinton, and your staff, for all citizens of the world: may peace come to all your homes.

In the Jewish tradition, it is customary to conclude our prayers with the word 'Amen'. With your permission, men of peace, I shall conclude with words taken from the prayer recited by Jews daily, and whoever of you volunteer, I would ask the entire audience to join me in saying 'Amen':

"He maketh peace in His high places. He shall make peace for us and for all of Israel. And they shall say: Amen."