Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty

Remarks of President Carter, President Anwar al-Sadat of Egypt, and Prime Minister Menahem Begin of Israel at the Signing Ceremony. March 26, 1979

President Carter. During the past 30 years, Israel and Egypt have waged war. But for the past 16 months, these same two great nations have waged peace. Today we celebrate a victory—not of a bloody military campaign, but of an inspiring peace campaign. Two leaders who will loom large in the history of nations, President Anwar al-Sadat and Prime Minister Menahem Begin, have conducted this campaign with all the courage, tenacity, brilliance, and inspiration of any generals who have ever led men and machines onto the field of battle.

At the end of this campaign, the soil of the two lands is not drenched with young blood. The countrysides of both lands are free from the litter and the carnage of a wasteful war. Mothers in Egypt and Israel are not weeping today for their children fallen in senseless battle. The dedication and determination of these two world statesmen have borne fruit. Peace has come to Israel and to Egypt.

I honor these two leaders and their government officials who have hammered out this peace treaty which we have just signed. But most of all, I honor the people of these two lands whose yearning for peace kept alive the negotiations which today culminate in this glorious event.

We have won at last the first step of peace, a first step on a long and difficult road. We must not minimize the obstacles which still lie ahead. Differences still separate the signatories to this treaty from
one another, and also from some of their neighbors who fear what they have just done. To overcome these differences, to dispel these fears, we must rededicate ourselves to the goal of a broader peace with justice for all who have lived in a state of conflict in the Middle East.

We have no illusions—we have hopes, dreams, and prayers, yes, but no illusions.

There now remains the rest of the Arab world, whose support and whose cooperation in the peace process is needed and honestly sought. I am convinced that other Arab people need and want peace. But some of their leaders are not yet willing to honor these needs and desires for peace. We must now demonstrate the advantages of peace and expand its benefits to encompass all those who have suffered so much in the Middle East.

Obviously, time and understanding will be necessary for people, hitherto to become neighbors in the best sense of the word.

Just because a paper is signed, all the problems will not automatically go away. Future days will require the best from us to give reality to these lofty aspirations.

Let those who would shatter peace, who would callously spill more blood, be aware that we three and all others who may join us will vigorously wage peace.

So let history record that deep and ancient antagonism can be settled without bloodshed and without staggering waste of precious lives, without rapacious destruction of the land.

It has been said, and I quote, “Peace has one thing in common with its enemy, with the fiend it battles, with war; peace is active, not passive; peace is doing, not waiting; peace is aggressive—attacking; peace plans its strategy and encircles the enemy; peace marshals its forces and storms the gates; peace gathers its weapons and pierces the defense; peace, like war, is waged.”

It is true that we cannot enforce trust and cooperation between nations, but we can use all our strength to see that nations do not again go to war.

All our religious doctrines give us hope. In the Koran, we read: “But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou also incline towards peace, and trust in God; for He is the One that heareth and knoweth all things.”

And the prophet Isaiah said: “Nations shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

So let us now lay aside war. Let us now reward all the children of Abraham who hunger for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Let us now enjoy the adventure of becoming fully human, fully neighbors, even brothers and sisters. We pray God, we pray God together, that these dreams will come true. I believe they will.

Thank you very much.

President Sadat. President Carter, dear friends:

This is certainly one of the happiest moments in my life. It is a historic turning point of great significance for all peace-loving nations. Those among us who are endowed with vision cannot fail to comprehend the dimensions of our sacred mission. The Egyptian people, with their heritage and unique awareness of history, have realized from the very beginning the meaning and value of this endeavor.

In all the steps I took, I was not performing a personal mission. I was merely expressing the will of a nation. I'm proud of my people and of belonging to them.
Today, a new dawn is emerging out of the darkness of the past. A new chapter of peace is being opened in the history of coexistence among nations, one that's worthy of our spiritual values and civilization.

Never before had men encountered such a complex dispute, which is highly charged with emotions. Never before did we need that much courage and imagination to confront a single challenge. Never before had any cause generated such much interest in all four corners of the globe.

Men and women of good will have devoted day and night to bring about this happy moment. Egyptians and Israelis pursued their sacred goal, undeterred by difficulties and complications. Hundreds of dedicated individuals on both sides have given generously of their thought and effort to translate the cherished dream into a living reality.

The man who performed the miracle was President Carter. Without exaggeration, what he did constitutes one of the greatest achievements of our time. He devoted his skill, hard work and, above all, his firm belief in the ultimate triumph of good against evil to ensure the success of our mission.

Some he has been the best companion and partner along the road to peace. With his deep sense of justice and genuine commitment to human rights, we were able to confront the most difficult obstacles.

There came certain moments when hope was eroding and retreating in the face of crisis. However, President Carter remained unshaken in his confidence and determination. He is a man of faith and passion. Before anything else, the signing of the peace treaty and the exchanged letter is a tribute to the spirit and legacy of Jimmy Carter.

Happily, he was armed with the blessing of God and the support of his people. For that we are grateful to each and every American who contributed in his own way to the success of our endeavor.

We are also heartened by the understanding of hundreds of thousands of Israelis who remained unwavering in their commitment to peace. The continuation of this spirit is vital to the coronation of our effort.

We realize that difficult times lay ahead. The signing of these documents marks only the beginning of peace. But it is an indispensable start. Other steps remain to be taken without delay or procrastination. Much will depend on the success of these steps. We are all committed to pursue our efforts until the fruits of the comprehensive settlement we agreed upon are shared by all parties to the conflict.

President Carter once said that the United States is committed without reservation to seeing the peace process through until all parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict are at peace. We value such a pledge from a leader who raised the banners of morality and ethics as a substitute for power politics and opportunism.

The steps we took in the recent past will serve Arab vital interests. The liberation of Arab land and the reinstitution of Arab authority in the West Bank and Gaza would certainly enhance our common strategic interests.

While we take the initiative to protect these interests, we remain faithful to our Arab commitment. To us, this is a matter of destiny. Pursuing peace is the only avenue which is compatible with our culture and creed.

Let there be no more wars or bloodshed between Arabs and Israelis—let there be no more wars or bloodshed be-
tween Arabs and Israelis. Let there be no more suffering or denial of rights. Let there be no more despair or loss of faith. Let no mother lament the loss of her child. Let no young man waste his life on a conflict from which no one benefits. Let us work together until the day comes when they beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks. And God does call to the abode of peace. He does guide whom He pleases to His way.

[At this point, President Sadat repeated the last two sentences in Arabic.]

Thank you.

Prime Minister Begin. Mr. President of the United States of America; Mr. President of the Arab Republic of Egypt; Mr. Vice President; Mr. Speaker of the House of Representatives; Mr. Speaker of the Knesset; Members of the Cabinets of the United States, of Egypt, and Israel; Members of the Congress and the Knesset; Your Excellencies; chairman of the board of governors of the Jewish Agency; chairman of the executive of the Zionist Organization; Mrs. Gruber, the mother of the sons; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen:

I have come from the land of Israel, the land of Zion and Jerusalem, and here I am in humility and with pride as a son of the Jewish people, as one of the generation of the Holocaust and redemption.

The ancient Jewish people gave the world a vision of eternal peace, of universal disarmament, of abolishing the teaching and the learning of war.

Two prophets, Yishayahu Ben Amotz and Micah Hamorashti, having foreseen the spiritual unity of man under God,

with these words coming forth from Jerusalem, gave the nations of the world the following vision—expressed in identical terms—"And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Despite the tragedies and disappointments of the past, we must never forego that vision, that human dream, that unshakable faith.

Peace is the beauty of life. It is sunshine. It is the smile of a child, the love of a mother, the joy of a father, the togetherness of a family. It is the advancement of man, the victory of a just cause, the triumph of truth. Peace is all of these and more, and more.

These are words I uttered in Oslo, on December 10, 1978, while receiving the second half of the Nobel Peace Prize. The first half went, rightly so, to President Sadat. And I took the liberty to repeat them here on this momentous, historic occasion.

It is a great day in the annals of two ancient nations, Egypt and Israel, whose sons met in battle five times in one generation, fighting and falling.

Let us turn our hearts to our heroes and pay tribute to their eternal memory. It is thanks to them, to our fallen heroes, that we could have reached this day.

However, let us not forget that in ancient times, our two nations met also in alliance. Now we make peace, the cornerstone of cooperation and friendship.

It is a great day in your life, Mr. President of the United States. You have worked so hard, so insistently, so consistently to achieve this goal. And your labors and your devotion bore God-blessed fruit.

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1 Rivka Gruber, an Israeli public figure since her loss of two sons in the 1948 war of independence, and author of the book "The Mother of the Sons."
Our friend, President Sadat, said that he knew the unknown soldier of the peace-making effort. I agree, but as usual, with an amendment. [Laughter] A soldier in the service of peace, you are. You are, Mr. President, even, mirabile dictu, an intranquil fighter for peace. But Jimmy Carter, the President of the United States, is completely unknown. [Laughter] And so it is his efforts which will be remembered and recorded by generations to come.

It is, of course, a great day in your life, Mr. President of the Arab Republic of Egypt. In the face of adversity and hostility, you have demonstrated the human spirit that can change history—civil courage.

A great field commander once said, "Civil courage is sometimes more difficult to show than military courage." You showed both, Mr. President. But now it is our turn to show civil courage in order to proclaim to our peoples and to the world: No more war, no more bloodshed, no more bereavement. Peace unto you, salom, salaam—forever.

And it is, ladies and gentlemen, the greatest day in my life. The first day, May 14, 1948, when our flag was raised. Our independence in our ancestors' land was proclaimed after 1,878 years of dispersion, persecution, humiliation, and, ultimately, physical destruction. We fought for our liberation alone, and with God's help, we won the day. That is a spring we can never experience again.

The second day was when Jerusalem, the one city and our brave, perhaps most hardened soldiers, the parachutists, raced with tears and kissed the ancient stones of the remnants of the wall destined to protect the chosen place of God's glory. Our hearts wept with them in remembrance.

[In Hebrew] "Our feet shall stand within the gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together."

[In English] This is the third day in my life. I have signed a treaty of peace with our great neighbor, with Egypt. The heart is full and overflowing. God gave me the strength to persevere, to survive the horrors of Nazism and of the Stalinite concentration camp and some other dangers, to endure, not to waver in nor flinch from my duty, to accept abuse from foreigners and, what is more painful, from my own people, and even from my close friends This effort, too, bore some fruit.

Therefore, it is the proper place and the appropriate time to bring back to memory the song and prayer of thanksgiving I learned as a child, in the home of my father and mother that doesn't exist anymore, because they were among the 6 million people—men, women, and children—who sanctified the Lord's name with the sacred blood which reddened the rivers of Europe from the Rhine to the Danube, from the Bug to the Volga, because, only because they were born Jews, and because they didn't have a country of their own, and neither a valiant Jewish army to defend them, and because nobody, nobody came to their rescue, although they cried out, "Save us, save us"—de profundis—"from the depths of the pits and agony."

That is the Song of Degrees, written 2 millennia and 500 years ago, when our forefathers returned from their first exile to Jerusalem and Zion.

[At this point, Prime Minister Begin spoke in Hebrew]

I will not translate. Every man, whether Jew or Christian or Moslem, can read it
in his own language in the Book of the Books. It is just Psalm 126.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. on the North Lawn of the White House. Prior to their remarks, President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin signed, and President Carter witnessed, the treaty and related documents.

The ceremony was attended by officials of the three Governments and invited guests. It was broadcast live on radio and television.

Earlier in the day the President held separate meetings with President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin and, prior to the ceremony, the President and Mrs. Carter hosted a private luncheon for President and Mrs. Sadat and Prime Minister and Mrs. Begin at the White House.

Following the ceremony, the President met at the White House with Members of Congress to discuss U.S. assistance to Egypt and Israel.

**Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty**

*Toasts at a State Dinner Honoring President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin.*

March 26, 1979

**President Carter. President Sadat, Prime Minister Begin, Egyptian friends, Israeli friends, American friends:**

This is one of those evenings that it’s been hard for me to stay seated also, I’ve been so excited.

Most of the times in history when a peace treaty was signed, one nation has been a victor and the other nation has been vanquished. One nation has won; the other nation has lost. Today we’ve signed a peace treaty when both nations have won.

This is indeed a joyous occasion. We’ve prayed for peace, and we have worked for peace. And now we humbly give thanks to God that we can celebrate the beginnings of peace in the Middle East.