

# A NEVER-ENDING QUEST FOR PEACE



*Israel has lost a light,  
the world has lost a  
forward thinker,  
the Jewish people  
have lost a wise voice,  
and I have lost a friend.*

- S. DANIEL ABRAHAM

SHIMON PERES ז"ל  
AUG. 2, 1923 - SEPT. 28, 2016

Founder of a Nation | Nobel Prize Winner | Humanitarian | Visionary  
Warrior for Peace | Statesman | Political Giant | Author and Poet  
An Inspiration for a Generation

President Shimon Peres ז"ל, the last of Israel's founding generation and a man who served his country for seven decades, died Sept. 28, two weeks after suffering a stroke. Respected worldwide, he had been honored with a Nobel Peace Prize, Presidential Medal of Freedom, French Legion of Honour and the Congressional Gold Medal. He was 93.

Unwavering in his optimism that Israel could achieve peace with its neighbors, he dedicated his life to that pursuit, was at the forefront of creating Israel's defense forces and was instrumental in turning Israel into the startup nation it is today. As foreign minister in 1993, he held secret negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization that led to the Oslo Accords to give limited self-government to the Palestinians in Gaza and part of the West Bank. Peres convinced his friend and sometime-rival, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin ז"ל, to agree to the accords, leading to the famous White House signing with PLO leader Yasir Arafat and a Nobel Peace Prize shared among the three.

Peres also spearheaded Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, and his secret meetings with Jordan's King Hussein ultimately led to a peace treaty between the two countries.

Born in Poland, the young Shimon Persky was 11 years old when his family moved to Palestine. Family members who remained behind perished in the Holocaust.

As a teenager, President Peres helped found Kibbutz Alumot in the Galilee and was elected its secretary. Active in Mapai, the predecessor to the Labor Party, he was recruited by David Ben-Gurion to survey and map out the Sinai, maps that were crucial during the War of Independence. Ben-Gurion

tapped him in 1948 to head Israel's nascent Navy, and then named him director general of Israel's Ministry of Defense. First elected to Israel's Knesset in 1959, he held numerous positions throughout the years, including: president, twice prime minister, acting prime minister, vice premier, deputy prime minister, senior deputy prime minister, foreign minister, defense minister, finance minister and deputy defense minister.

He also headed the Labor Party for 15 years, became the first Israeli president in history to speak to a Muslim country's legislature when he addressed the Turkish parliament in 2007 and founded the Peres Center for Peace, a nongovernmental organization devoted to promoting peace-building efforts between Israel and its neighbors and between Israel's Jewish and Arab citizens.

A visionary and a pragmatist, Peres believed that Jews and Arabs alike had to apply to their problems more reason and less emotion. He focused on long-term solutions, not just winning the next election. As finance minister under Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, he said in a statement that epitomized him: "I am for peace. I am not going to move the prime minister. I am going to move the people. I am going for the things that are good for the good of the country."

Peres met the love of his life, Sonya, who shunned the spotlight, at an Israel youth village. The two were married for 67 years, until her death in 2011. He is survived by his children Dr. Tsvia Walden, Yoni Peres and Nechemia Peres, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

*Zikhrone livrakha, may the memory of Shimon Peres be a blessing.*



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

*Dan Abraham, Robert Wexler, Sara Ehrman, Toni Verstandig,  
John Ruskay, Yoni Komorov, David Abreu, Avi Gil, Dan Rothem*