



# PRIME MINISTER

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP  
SPEECH AT THE MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR MR YITZHAK RABIN,  
CENTRAL SYNAGOGUE, BONDI JUNCTION, 3 DECEMBER 1995**

## **E&OE PROOF COPY**

Well Dr Oystragh, Ambassador, Consul-General, Rabbi Franklin, Rabbi Wolff, Rabbi Ingram, my Parliamentary colleague, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you very much indeed for paying me the honour of asking me to come on this occasion to remember Yitzhak Rabin and to remember what a significant life he had, and to recall the very great things he did for the Jewish people and for the State of Israel.

I had never met him. He is one of the people when one goes through life and you often think I would like to meet this person. He was one of the people I would have liked to have met. But I never, ever, had the opportunity.

But I always admired, obviously, his physical courage, his courage as a soldier and a politician and remember well some of the things which have already been said about his work, about his role in 1948 and in 1967, and how much and how important he was to the people of Israel and to the State of Israel.

I think people came to his funeral to pay tribute to his courage and to underline how important his work had been. And his courage was not simply the courage of a soldier, but the courage of a politician in the sense that he understood that, in a democracy, people need to feel the community, they need the plasma of democracy, they need the pulse of community and community opinion and one ceases to be, in a sense, a democrat if one is removed from them. So one always had the sense of the accessibility that he gave to the people of Israel and, of course, the attendant risks which he took and the courage which, of course, he showed.

The security of Israel and the survival of Israel was, of course, the one thing running through his whole life. But that he had the flexibility to see that that aim could be achieved by other than the policy he had formerly adopted was the mark, perhaps, of his greatest strength.

That he understood that while Israel could be defended in a military way, it couldn't be defended permanently in a military way and that to make it secure, one had to garner the support of the surrounding nations and peoples, and to do it on the basis of friendship and to do it with magnanimity. And, I think, having dedicated his life to its security and its survival, he saw peace as the way in which that aim would be secured and the magnanimity of the peace process was important to securing the peace.

And I was very moved by similar thoughts that Shimon Peres had to say when I visited him, saying that he would dedicate himself to this process, that he would put his Government on it and that it was more important than the Government itself. And that, were they not to succeed in this, then the security of Israel which Yitzhak Rabin and he, Shimon Peres, had dreamed of may allude them.

And one had the impression, just in a short visit to Jerusalem seeing the young people - particularly the young people with the peace signs all over the city - was very moving indeed. And I thought that that sense that the community had to embrace peace not just at the political level, but right down through the society, was very much in evidence during the period I was there.

I was also struck by the informality of the funeral. A funeral without pageantry. One which was, again, accessible and wasn't distant from the people and in my view it underlined, again, the democratic tenor of Israel and the sense of democracy of the place that the funeral was as it was - without pomp, without an overbearing ceremony and accessible to all the people. And, I think, that the shock and the loss was borne, in a sense, by the dignity which has come to Israel's democracy and those who are participating in it.

So, I think, we - one month later - think about this very great man and we know what he has done for Israel and we know what he was doing with a very intricate and precise process of peace. In, first of all, building the confidence within his former opponents, building the confidence so they could be confident enough to move from the political to the constitutional to the administrative to be able to actually operate an authority, to be able to operate a system of civil government and to invest that importance in them and, in so doing, lift them up so that the peace process could actually be accomplished.

This takes a great understanding of human nature, a great understanding of one's opponent. But a very great understanding of one's objectives and I think Yitzhak Rabin, obviously, had these things.

I can only wish Shimon Peres well in this, as we all do. And in watching him pursue the peace process, with I think a renewed vigour from the people of Israel, and in the securing of it, we will do more than anything we can say tonight, or elsewhere, to remember Yitzhak Rabin and to pay tribute to his life and to his work and to his strength and, in that way, to see his dream come true.

I appreciated very much the invitation to the funeral. I appreciated the fact I could even be there. But his life mattered too much not to be there. That is why I went and that is why I am here tonight.

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