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"Keep the Promise." 11 December 1971.

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KEEP THE PROMISE

At no time since the Six-Day War has there been any substantial movement toward a negotiated settlement of the conflict. The war was won, but the victory has not yielded any fruit. We have not achieved peace.

Right after the war there was Khartoum, with its declaration of no peace, no negotiations, no recognition.

Then there was the guerrilla movement.

Then there was the war of attrition.

Now there is a 16-month-old cease-fire which the President of Egypt threatens to break at any moment.

There was a UN resolution, 242, which was interpreted differently by the two sides -- Egypt claiming it meant Israeli withdrawal first, to be followed by negotiations; and Israel claiming it was a total package deal, with the negotiations determining the terms of withdrawal.

A mediator was appointed, Jarring, who shuttled back and forth, asking each side what it really meant and wanted, acting as a mailman to deliver questions and answers from one side to the other, but basically spinning his wheels -- until he ground to a halt last February by taking sides -- i.e. he ceased being neutral and took the position that Israel should withdraw first. That ended his usefulness, for the time being, because Israel simply said no.

The next initiative came from Mr. Rogers, who thought that U.S. goodwill with both sides would enable him to get substantive negotiations going -- and he made suggestions about opening the Suez Canal, hoping that a partial settlement on this one issue

might uncork the entire negotiating process and open the way for a total settlement. Actually it was Israel herself who had first suggested her willingness to have the Canal opened, allowing Egyptian technicians the right to cross over and work in the East Bank, and tacitly agreeing to the financial gain which would accrue to Egypt through the \$250 m. annual tolls which open shipping would provide. Of course, open shipping was to include Israeli flag carriers and Israel-bound vessels of all flags.

But Egypt insisted on withdrawal, and then Mr. Rogers went the way of Mr. Jarring, when he too took sides and suggested to Israel she should withdraw, just a little, not as much as Egypt wanted, but at least a little; and also to permit some troops to cross over, not as many as Egypt wanted, but at least a little. Israel again was forced to say no. So the Rogers Plan, like the Jarring Mission, hit the dust. Notice that the common denominator of both failures was the fact that both suggested that Israel should withdraw, should make the beau geste, should somehow display greater flexibility and generosity, for Israel had, after all, won the Six-Day War.

The next move was that of the Four Wise Men from Africa. They decided to try, and a rather remarkable thing happened. As recently as June the Organization of African Unity had voted that Israel should withdraw. In November the committee of four presidents who had gone back and forth between Cairo and Jerusalem twice, and then reported to a larger committee of ten in Dakar, came back to Israel with a recommendation that Israel resume the Jarring Mission talks, but without the pre-condition of withdrawal. In other words, they switched positions. And on Monday of this past week Mr. Eban announced in the UN that Israel would be

willing to resume the Jarring negotiations on the basis of the African memorandum.

As an aside, it must be said that there was some skepticism in Jerusalem when the Africans first let it be known that they would like to come to see if they could make any suggestions to break the log-jam. Of course, everyone was polite. The elaborate protocol plans immediately went into action. There was great sensitivity about the feelings of not one, but four presidents. Four floors of the King David Hotel were emptied of all residents, including the Young Leadership Mission of the UJA -- and the Israel Philharmonic brushed up on the unfamiliar National Anthems. But behind the bustle of preparations was the rather weary feeling that all this would produce nothing new, because if the well-meaning Africans were to come out once again with the well-worn recommendation of withdrawal, we would all once again be back at square one.

And then, of course, came the great surprise. Somehow, the realism of the Israeli position had penetrated their consciousness. They understood that Israel would not be pressured into withdrawal, so they didn't even suggest it. They simply proposed to renew the talking, through Jarring, instead of drifting into a renewal of fire, as Sadat is threatening. Israel has accepted their proposal. The UN is now debating again, this very week -- while Sadat threatens.

Is he bluffing? He alone knows. Israel cannot and will not withdraw, except to secure and recognized borders, even if this provides Sadat with an excuse to fire -- because Israel has learned through the bitter experience of 1957 that simple withdrawal, without peace, really leads inevitably to more shooting anyhow.

It is entirely likely, therefore, that the months, or even the weeks ahead, may see the resumption of hostilities. On 6 November Sadat assumed direct control of the army, and since that date has gone to army headquarters each day, in army uniform. On 17 November the Egyptian War Minister said that the occupied land must be recovered by force of arms, and on the same day the Secretary-General of the Arab Socialist Union, Egypt's only political party, said that Egypt was ready to sacrifice one, two, three million people to get Israel out of the territories it took in 1967. On 21 November Sadat went to the Canal, spoke to the front-line officers, saying that the time for battle had come. The next day he visited a front-line Air Force base and repeated the announcement that his decision was to fight. On 24 November the Chief of Staff of the army said military conflict was the only course for Egypt, and the next day announced that 12 Arab nations had agreed on a Battle Plan against Israel. Measures were taken to put Egypt on a war footing -- collecting blood donations, partial blackout and practice air alerts. On 1 December King Hussein joined the chorus by warning, in his speech to Parliament, that another battle was inevitable as long as Israel continued to occupy Arab territory.

The leaders of Israel have warned the people, openly and frankly. As long ago as June, Dayan said the likelihood of renewed fighting on the Canal front had increased sharply. The next day, 20 June, Golda warned of a new war. In recent weeks, Dayan said again that war may break out in a few months. On 14 November he said Sadat must be taken seriously. On 17 November General Bar-Lev said that if fighting should resume Israel would try to hold all areas held at present, and try to force a

return to the cease-fire by exerting military pressure on Egypt and its partners. On 21 November, Eban stated to the international press that Sadat must be taken seriously, and former General Meir Amit warned on TV that day that an outbreak of hostilities might be expected early in 1972. Former General Gavish said Israel would hit harder than in 1967, and the climax was reached on 25 November, when Golda Meir, in a major speech to the Labor Party, just before departing for Washington, warned the nation of the danger of impending war. She said: "We have to gear ourselves in the face of Sadat's threats, We have to live with the possibility of the renewal of war." She urged Israelis to look the facts squarely in the face, and close ranks.

There is a possibility that even though Sadat's war rhetoric appears to be clear and definite, he may find some way to climb down from the limb onto which he has placed himself. He may say that he wants to wait a bit, to see if the UN will condemn Israel or apply sanctions. He may say that he will wait until he can call an Arab summit conference in order to obtain clear commitments of money and troops. He may say that the Russians are discouraging him and he wants more time to convince them of his need to resume fire. Any of these reasons, or others, might serve as excuses for delay, if he wishes to delay. If not, the next 60 days may well be crucial. As General Yariv said, "Our enemies are on the verge of action."

If there is to be a renewal of fire, let the world understand that Israel's objective is only one: not to be pushed back, and to return as quickly as possible to the condition of cease-fire.

Israel has no far-flung military objectives - there is no place she wishes to go. No one seeks to occupy the west side of the Canal, or Cairo, or Damascus. Without agreed upon borders, Israel at present has at least defensible ones, and is prepared to sit on them, without any further moves - neither forward nor backward. Next to peace, the best possible condition is cease-fire. Should Egypt renew fire, Israel's whole military purpose will be to convince her to return to the cease-fire. The minute one is proposed, Israel will accept it, not out of fear - but because the death of young men, on both sides, is abhorrent. We want no war - we want peace - but if we can't get that, at least we want cease fire.

While the war overshadows everything else, nevertheless we must turn our attention to other aspects of life in Israel. Life there is lived as an intricate symphony is played -- with major and minor themes, recurring, interweaving, twisting around each other -- in fugue fashion. The other two strong themes, beside war, are immigration and social problems. And we must deal with these, as though there were no war. Even as we think of Russian planes with stand-off missiles, which can fire air-to-ground from great distances, we must run to greet other planes with Russian immigrants. We must welcome those Jews, absorb them, disperse them to their relatives or to absorption centers, deal with their problems, and focus every bit of attention and money on their successful integration -- without being diverted for one second by the thought that there might be those other planes in the air carrying missiles under their wings aimed at our centers of population. And at the very same moment that we are thinking

of planes, there might be a demonstration in some city protesting against overcrowded housing or inadequate wages. The demonstrations as such are not important for there is seldom mob violence, thank God -- but they are symbolic of social problems crying for solutions. To ignore these symptoms would be folly. To find solutions is extremely hard. Yet here again, we must turn, as though neither war nor immigration existed, and face the question of Sephardic-Ashkenazic conflict, slums, inadequate education, juvenile delinquency -- giving to these matters the maximum attention possible.

As for immigration, let us understand very clearly, as we surely must after a quarter century which has seen almost one and one-half million Jews enter the Promised Land, that our moral strength lies in the open door policy. Should we even think for a single second of abandoning that policy, then we will destroy the very basis of our existence. Thousands of men have already died to defend the right of Israel to exist. That right and those deaths have meaning only if they are related to the sacred purpose of our nationhood. Should we, because of the terrible financial burden of the war which drives us inexorably deeper and deeper into debt, ever tamper with the fleeting thought of easing the burden by slowing down, or postponing, or even closing for some period the flow of Jews, then we will damn ourselves and quickly lose the sense of destiny which drives us to the creative heights so far achieved.

No -- the heavier the burden of defense, DAFKE do we welcome a heavier burden of immigration, and double DAFKE, because the wave of today carries on its crest the miraculous sight of Russian Jews coming home at last after a half-century of being cut off.

OH miracle of all miracles! How eagerly awaited -- how long yearned for -- how gossamer-thin the hopes -- and how powerful the reality that thousands actually came last year, and perhaps tens of thousands will come next year. This makes it all worth while. This is the kind of Jewish victory of the spirit which removes some of the bad taste of past defeats.

And so what if a few of these Russian Jews complain? They are only human -- not saints. We should correct whatever bothers them, if at all possible, and after that if they are still unhappy, and even if some wish to return, that too is a human right, and we must not be discouraged by their attitude. We who are so thrilled at the miracle of the rebirth of Jewish consciousness in Russian youth, must not lose that thrill simply because some individual family makes a bad adjustment. Look always at the broad historic trend. Listen to the words of Prof. Michael Zand who was twice arrested, and be uplifted:

"I had everything in the Soviet Union, but I was a privileged slave among slaves. I was deprived of my human freedom and my Jewish identity. Don't say 'Let my people live'. They can't live in the Soviet Union. Say 'Let my people go'."

Listen to the story of the Limovsky family, and be uplifted:

(Mrs. Esther Limovsky, of Novo-Sibirsk, first told this story on October 25, 1971)

"I wanted to come to Palestine all my life. In 1946 my first husband and I tried to get a visa to leave Russia for Poland (he was born a Polish citizen), thence to go to Palestine, to fight."

"We were refused. In 1948 he wrote to the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in Moscow saying he wanted to go to Palestine to fight for Jewish independence. He was refused. In 1950 he was arrested and received ten years prison for writing that letter. He was released in 1955. In 1957 Poland again agreed to accept its citizens from Russia. We tried again and were refused. In 1959 he died. I later married again and was living in far-off Siberia.

"In 1969 my boss told me he heard in Moscow that some Jews were getting exit visas for Israel. My whole family (six people) decided to try again. We went to Moscow, a journey of many days on the train, and were told by the Jewish underground that if we had guts and created a fuss maybe we would get the visa. So we applied. They gave permission to my 81 year old father, but no one else. We refused to accept it. Then they gave permission to my 22 year old son, because he was an activist and they wanted to get rid of him. So the two went together to Israel in 1969.

"Thereafter it took us two more years (half this time spent in Moscow) to get visas. We published articles in samizdat, the underground newspaper. I was detained twice -- once in Moscow when we made a sit-down strike near the Supreme Soviet. My present husband was detained 5 days for signing a petition on behalf of Jewish exit.

"When my son and father left in 1969 -- 12 people accompanied them to the airport. Most were afraid. When the rest of our family left in 1971 -- 70 accompanied us. The mood of Russian Jewry has changed."

While our attention is focused on the Russian Jews, let no one overlook the tens of thousands of others, from many countries and continents, Europe, Asia, Africa, this very North America, who have streamed to Israel this year -- and who need and must receive the generous welcome which it is our joy to provide. The year 1971 will see approximately 45,000 arrivals -- the year 1972 will see more.

All this talk of new immigrants, inevitably reminds us of older immigrants, and this leads us to the social welfare problems which afflict about 10% of the population -- 60,000 families -- 1/4 million souls who are poor and suffering. It may be gratifying, on one hand, to say that 90% of the population is slowly but surely making its way upward in the scale of improvement, in housing, education, wages. For a small country, without raw materials, to have developed an economy which supports almost everyone with at least a minimal standard is indeed a triumph. On the other hand, even 10%, living below the poverty line, causes deep pain and anguish. Perhaps the Israeli Black Panthers did a service by bringing public attention to focus more sharply on the multi-problem poor families. But their charge of discrimination is hollow. Israel is not a racist state. The thought that the government deliberately favors Ashkenazim over Sephardim in wages or housing or schooling is absurd. Poverty is a function of education, skill, size of family, luck and chronology.

Take the matter of overcrowded housing. Immigrants who came 15 - 20 years ago received apartments of 350 square feet which was the then prevailing standard. Everyone received this size because that's all there was -- the country could not afford to build bigger. Moroccans and Rumanians -- both received the

same. No discrimination. But the Moroccan family size was 2 or 3 times the Rumanian -- usually about 6 children compared to 2. So the Moroccans lived worse -- more crowded -- not every person had a bed or cot -- the children had no place to study lessons -- school work was affected -- teen-age children fled to the streets -- the home was not a stabilizing force in family life but a tiny horror chamber.

As the years went on, many people escaped from these small flats, by scrimping, borrowing, imposing on relatives -- and gradually got themselves into larger quarters. Who remained behind? The weakest and poorest, beset by many problems. It was usually the man with the least education, no special skill or vocation, the largest number of children, the greatest number of health problems who remained on the bottom of the social ladder. Unfortunately, the largest number of such multi-problem families came from Asian or African origin. Hence the cry arose of discrimination.

Listen to the case of Mr. X. It is typical of thousands of families in Israel today. He is a Yemenite, now aged 40, who came in 1948, lives in Yavneh, and works in a factory which makes bottled orange juice. He has 10 children. He lives in a four room house, most of which he built with his own hands. It took many many years, but the Yemenite tradition prefers individual houses, with a bit of garden round about, rather than a large bloc-house with many families, and the children clustering like flies in the stair wells. He took private loans from 20 relatives in his family-clan, plus a bank loan, which he repays £54 per month, with a book of coupons to remind him. He repays his various relatives irregularly with little bits of money, as he accumulates

a few spare pounds from time to time.

He earns IL550 per month in the factory for a full 48 hour week. The National Insurance gives him IL17.50 per month per child, as a supplementary grant, which means IL175 per month for the whole lot. And since these sums are woefully inadequate, the wife works on her knees, as a scrubwoman in the local school for four hours daily, earning thus an additional IL230 per month. Thus the total income, from all sources, is IL955, or approximately \$228 per month.

Of the ten children, the oldest daughter of 18, is married, and no longer lives at home. Three of the children attend boarding school, at IL50 per child per month. They eat there, except for summer months. So there are six children and two adults living at home, on IL751 or \$178 per month, after school and bank are paid. It simply cannot be done. This is a poverty-stricken family. They eat meat once weekly - on Shabbat. Daily fare is vegetables, yoghurt, bread. Each morning there is an omelette of two eggs divided between the four youngest children. They take their groceries on credit - pay as much as they can at the end of the month - never know quite how much they owe - and simply bless the grocer in their prayers every day.

The biggest problem is the 16 year old boy. He wanted to continue his studies in high school - learning electronics (which would have made a good earning vocation for him in later life) - but the father could not pay the IL100 monthly tuition.

The boy picked up a knife against his father, to strike him, to demand the money. He would not, or could not, believe, in his desperation, that the father did not have it. After the fight he ran away from home, now does not speak to the father - and the mother tries to patch it up - and weeps for the tragedy which befell the family.

In spite of all these heavy problems, when asked if they were sorry to have come to Israel, they were shocked at the question. They were not angry with the country, they would live on bread and water if they had to.

Actually, the whole matter analyzes down to a few simple essentials:

1. There is grinding poverty in Israel, which must be eliminated. The poor work, and usually work hard. With the few exceptions of those too sick or handicapped, everyone works. This is not a system of welfare checks for unemployed. But the work does not produce enough money. Golda summed it up at one meeting in these words: "Nobody is hungry; children don't run around barefoot; nobody lives out in the open. But after that, the situation with thousands of families is unbearable."
2. There is an awareness on the part of the authorities. In 1960 - 30% of the money available after defense needs was spent on social services; in 1965 - 40%; in 1970 - 44%. So these services for the underprivileged are not neglected. There is simply not enough money, after defense, to do a better job.
3. Every effort must be made not to allow the economic pressures to produce a social split in the population. If Israel were ever to split into two groups, along whatever lines -- either Sephardic vs. Ashkenazic, or poor vs. middle class; or new immigrants vs. old immigrants -- then the dream of a Jewish State as the center for a united Jewish people would be lost for good. The problems must be solved, given the crushing

defense burden, in such a way that every citizen understands that the best possible is being done.

4. The war against poverty requires an enormous array of remedies: more pre-Kindergartens; day care centers so mothers can leave children and go to work to supplement family income; remedial tutoring so children can stay in school, ultimately learn a vocation, thus a livelihood; scholarship money so kids can go on to high school; vocational retraining for unskilled adults; better housing, which will require loans being made available on easy terms. All this takes money -- and every year as much as possible must be diverted from the military war and invested in this war.
5. The war against poverty is also linked with future immigration. Thousands of families of North African origin, now living in France, are watching and waiting to see how this process works its way out. As the war against poverty is gradually won, more such immigration will gradually come, and the unity of the nation will be preserved.

The theme of this campaign is Keep the Promise, and it applies to the condition of Jews in need all over the world. While the Jewish Agency utilizes funds in Israel to alleviate some of the problems described above, the JDC uses its share of the campaign in 27 different countries. There are Jews in these places to whom promises have been made, both explicit and implicit, which must be kept.

Did we not solemnly promise every man, woman or child who survived Hitler that we would ease some of the pain, wipe away some of the loneliness, forever embrace them with warm concern to

erase the memory of cold fear? There are old people surviving in Paris and Petach Tikvah -- there are sick and broken and handicapped in many cities of Europe and Israel -- there are mentally disturbed whose dreams of torture and torment will haunt them to the grave. All these victims of the Nazi bestiality must be tenderly served -- for we promised to shield and protect them from all future evil.

Did we not promise the Jews of North Africa, who were called at first the Forgotten Million, that once we learned of their plight we would never again leave them alone? There are children who need milk, and mothers who need clinics, and boys who need school, and men who need loans and clothes and advice. Ghettos must be cleaned and water piped in and new shoes given out on Rosh Hashanah.

Did we not promise the Jews of the Soviet Union that we are solidly with them in their fight for self-expression, and does not the keeping of that promise mean the shipping in of tens of thousands of parcels, so that they have a physical evidence of our moral and brotherly concern?

And the promise to the deaf, and the promise to the halt and the blind and the lonely, and the promise to tiny communities in far-off places, and all the other promises we've made to give schooling, and to teach trades and to improve health -- do we keep these promises? Of course we do -- no Jew anywhere, whom we can reach, is outside the pale of our work. Devoted men work hard to provide the help. And so it shall be in an endless commitment. The JDC shows a record of more than half a century of vigorous selfless labor in this vineyard. Long may it continue -- until all promises have been kept.

The over-view is clear. There is no peace, only threats of renewed war. In the face of this, the people of Israel refuse to withdraw, for they know viscerally that survival is not compromisable. They also know that it is nonsense to entrust one's physical safety to guarantees by others -- be they Big Four, or Big Two, or Big One Hundred and Thirty-Two. They also know that ultimate peace and security lie only far ahead on a long road which they must have the sustaining power to traverse.

Can they hold out? The question is power. Is there enough power? The answer is yes. Here is the secret. Power consists of Phantoms and schools; tanks and day nurseries. Power is maintaining open immigration, for then we are true to our destiny; and power is eradicating pverty. Power is a brilliantly skillful Air Force and a fully employed labor force. Power is the battle front and the home front mutually supporting each other in a totally homogeneous and thoroughly motivated populace.

Power depends upon support. Support does come from various friendly sources, but in the fullest and deepest sense, only from the Jewish people. We are alone, in the ultimate sense -- a member of no bloc, no regional alliance. No other nation speaks our language or has our religion. We are simply unique -- and therefore depend upon each other. It was said some years ago, in a bold effort to express unity, that the Jews of Israel and the Diaspora were partners. This terminology is inadequate and inaccurate. Partners often quarrel, steal from each other, separate, even sue each other. The Jews of the world are not partners -- each with the other. They are each other -- in an existentialist sense. What one experiences and feels, all do. We are a unity,

an identity, an entity, unbreakable, indivisible. Herein lies the secret of our power. So long as one of us is alive, all are alive. Support flows like a magnetic current, quiet and eternal.

Power consists of the compassion and conviction which we share -- London and Los Angeles, Johannesburg and Jerusalem. And we are just beginning to learn to share. Up to now we have been sitting through the overture. Now the real work begins. Are we astounded that the campaign has reached almost \$300 million in the U. S. and another \$100 million in the rest of the free giving world? It is really only the beginning. This campaign can and will and must expand to \$500 and \$600 and \$1,000 million, if that is what will be required. It is fascinating that talk of tiredness is no longer heard. We seem to have found a second wind. What is there to be tired of? Of living? All life is a struggle to keep going. We live -- and struggle -- and have faith -- and therein lies the power. War will extract its price from us, but no enemy will ever destroy us. We shall keep the promise -- made to God and our fellow man -- that the people of Israel and the land of Israel shall live forever.

The grandeur and glory of the dream of Israel sustains us on a level of mystic expectancy. We have a far vision, of an Israel glowing like a golden Temple. The present reality of more hard struggle ahead simply makes the dream more alluring.

The leadership of Israel is magnificent.

The people's morale and willingness to endure is breathtaking.

With such leaders and such followers -- Israel will survive and flourish -- to the eternal glory of every Jew on earth.

Ben Gurion spoke recently at a celebration of his 85th birthday, and closed with a benediction:

ה' עז לעמו ה' יברך אה עמו בשלום

"The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."

First you must have strength, then you will have peace. There is no peace, except through strength. Be strong, be strong, and we shall be strengthened.

11
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