

SHIMON PERES

One of the architects of the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords, an agreement between Israel and Palestine, Shimon Peres has been involved in the government of Israel since 1952. During his long political career he held many cabinet positions, including prime minister. In 2007, the Knesset, Israel's Parliament, elected Peres as its president.

Born in Poland in 1923, Peres spent the formative years of his youth under the tutelage of his grandfather, Rabbi Zvi Meltzer, where he learned the Talmud and became a Haredi, which is the most conservative form of Orthodox Judaism. In 1934, Peres and his family moved to Tel Aviv, which was still part of Palestine. During World War II, all of Peres' remaining relatives in Poland were killed for their religious beliefs.

Peres began his career in government when he was appointed deputy director-general of the Ministry of Defense in 1952. He became a member of the Knesset, Israel's legislative body in 1959, but is perhaps best known for his work as Israel's foreign minister starting in 1986.

As foreign minister, Shimon Peres participated in 14 separate meetings in Oslo, Norway with Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian Chairman Yasser Arafat, negotiating a path to peace. Throughout these lengthy meetings, both sides stayed in the same residence and often shared meals, leading to a growing bond among the participants. The Oslo Peace Accords were eventually signed by both sides on September 13, 1993 at The White House in Washington, D.C.

The Nobel Peace Prize 1994 was awarded jointly to Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin for their efforts to create peace in the Middle East. In his Nobel acceptance speech, Peres stated that "Classical diplomacy and strategy were aimed at identifying enemies and confronting them. Now they have to identify dangers, global or local, and tackle them before they become disasters."

In 2007 Peres was nominated by Kadima, a centrist and liberal political party in Israel, to run for President. Peres was elected by the Knesset on June 13, 2007. He was the first former Prime Minister to be elected as President of Israel, and served as President from 2007 - 2014.



Shimon Peres © Architects of Peace Foundation

"THE SWORD, AS THE BIBLE TEACHES US, CONSUMES FLESH BUT IT CANNOT PROVIDE SUSTENANCE. IT IS NOT RIFLES BUT PEOPLE WHO TRIUMPH, AND THE CONCLUSION FROM ALL THE WARS IS THAT WE NEED BETTER PEOPLE, NOT BETTER RIFLES—TO WIN WARS, AND MAINLY TO AVOID THEM."

*EXCERPTS FROM SHIMON PERES: 1994 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE
LECTURE*

I thank the Nobel Prize Committee for its decision to name me among the laureates of the Peace Prize this year.

I am pleased to be receiving this Prize together with Yitzhak Rabin, with whom I have labored for long years for the defence of our country and with whom I now labor together in the cause of peace in our region.

I believe it is fitting that the Prize has been awarded to Yasser Arafat. His abandonment of the path of confrontation in favor of the path of dialogue has opened the way to peace between ourselves and the Palestinian people.

We are leaving behind us the era of belligerency and are striding together toward peace. It all began here in Oslo under the wise auspices and goodwill of the Norwegian people.

From my earliest youth, I have known that while one is obliged to plan with care the stages of one's journey, one is entitled to dream, and keep dreaming, of its destination. A man may feel as old as his years, yet as young as his dreams. The laws of biology do not apply to sanguine aspiration.

I was born in a small Jewish town in White Russia. Nothing Jewish now remains of it. From my youngest childhood I related to my place of birth as a mere way station. My family's dream, and my own, was to live in Israel, and our eventual voyage to the port of Jaffa was like making a dream come true. Had it not been for this dream and this voyage, I would probably have perished in the flames, as did so many of my people, among them most of my own family.

I went to school at an agricultural youth village in the heart of Israel. The village and its fields were enclosed by barbed wire which separated their greenness from the bleakness of the enmity all around. In the morning, we would go out to the fields with scythes on our backs to harvest the crop. In the evening, we went out with rifles on our shoulders to defend our village. On Sabbaths we would go out to visit our Arab neighbors. On Sabbaths, we would talk with them of peace, though the rest of the week we traded rifle fire across the darkness.

From the Ben Shemen youth village, my comrades and I went to Kibbutz Alumot in the Lower Galilee. We had no houses, no electricity, no running water. But we had magnificent views and a lofty dream: to build a new, egalitarian society that would ennoble each of its members.

Not all of it came true, but not all of it went to waste. The part that came true created a new landscape. The part that did not come true resides in our hearts.

For two decades, at the Ministry of Defence, I was privileged to work closely with a man who was and remains, to my mind, the greatest Jew of our time. From him I learned that the vision of the future should shape the agenda for the present; that one can overcome obstacles by dint of faith; that one may feel disappointment—but never despair. And above all, I learned that the wisest consideration is the moral one. David Ben-Gurion has

passed away, yet his vision continues to flourish: to be a singular people, to live at peace with our neighbors.

The wars we fought were forced upon us. Thanks to the Israel Defence Forces, we won them all, but we did not win the greatest victory that we aspired to: release from the need to win victories.

We proved that the aggressors do not necessarily emerge as the victors, but we learned that the victors do not necessarily win peace.

It is no wonder that war, as a means of conducting human affairs, is in its death throes and that the time has come to bury it.

The sword, as the Bible teaches us, consumes flesh but it cannot provide sustenance. It is not rifles but people who triumph, and the conclusion from all the wars is that we need better people, not better rifles—to win wars, and mainly to avoid them.

There was a time when war was fought for lack of choice. Today it is peace that is the “no-choice” option. The reasons of this are profound and incontrovertible. The sources of material wealth and political power have changed. No longer are they determined by the size of territory obtained by war. Today they are a consequence of intellectual potential, obtained principally by education.

Israel, essentially a desert country, has achieved remarkable agricultural yields by applying science to its fields, without expanding its territory or its water resources.

Science must be learned; it cannot be conquered. An army that can occupy knowledge has yet to be built. And that is why armies of occupation are a thing of the past. Indeed, even for defensive purposes, a country cannot rely on its army alone. Territorial frontiers are no obstacle to ballistic missiles, and no weapon can shield from a nuclear device. Today, therefore, the battle for survival must be based on political wisdom and moral vision no less than on military might.

Science, technology, and information are—for better or worse—universal. They are universally available. Their availability is not contingent on the color of skin or the place of birth. Past distinctions between West and East, North and South, have lost their importance in the face of a new distinction: between those who move ahead in pace with the new opportunities and those who lag behind.

Countries used to divide the world into their friends and foes. No longer. The foes now are universal—poverty, famine, religious radicalization, desertification, drugs, proliferation of nuclear weapons, ecological devastation. They threaten all nations, just as science and information are the potential friends of all nations.

Classical diplomacy and strategy were aimed at identifying enemies and confronting them. Now they have to identify dangers, global or local, and tackle them before they become disasters.

As we part a world of enemies, we enter a world of dangers. And if future wars break out, they will probably be wars of protest, of the weak against the strong, and not wars of occupation, of the strong against the weak.

The Middle East must never lose pride in having been the cradle of civilization. But though living in the cradle, we cannot remain infants forever.

Today as in my youth, I carry dreams. I would mention two: the future of the Jewish people and the future of the Middle East.

In history, Judaism has been far more successful than the Jews themselves. The Jewish people remained small but the spirit of Jerusalem went from strength to strength. The Bible is to be found in hundreds of millions of homes. The moral majesty of the Book of Books has been undefeated by the vicissitudes of history.

Moreover, time and again, history has succumbed to the Bible's immortal ideas. The message that the one, invisible God created Man in His image, and hence there are no higher and lower orders of man, has fused with the realization that morality is the highest form of wisdom and, perhaps, of beauty and courage too.

Slings, arrows and gas chambers can annihilate man, but cannot destroy human values, dignity, and freedom.

Jewish history presents an encouraging lesson for mankind. For nearly four thousand years, a small nation carried a great message. Initially, the nation dwelt in its own land; later, it wandered in exile. This small nation swam against the tide and was repeatedly persecuted, banished, and down-trodden. There is no other example in all of history, neither among the great empires nor among their colonies and dependencies—of a nation, after so long a saga of tragedy and misfortune, rising up again, shaking itself free, gathering together its dispersed remnants, and setting out anew on its national adventure. Defeating doubters within and enemies without. Reviving its land and its language. Rebuilding its identity, and reaching toward new heights of distinction and excellence.

The message of the Jewish people to mankind is that faith and moral vision can triumph over all adversity.

The conflicts shaping up as our century nears its close will be over the content of civilizations, not over territory. Jewish culture has lived over many centuries; now it has taken root again on its own soil. For the first time in our history, some five million people speak Hebrew as their native language. That is both a lot and a little: a lot, because there have never been so many Hebrew speakers; but a little, because a culture based on five million people can hardly withstand the pervasive, corrosive effect of the global television culture.

In the five decades of Israel's existence, our efforts have focused on reestablishing our territorial center. In the future, we shall have to devote our main effort to strengthen our spiritual center. Judaism—or Jewishness—is a fusion of belief, history, land, and language. Being Jewish means belonging to a people that is both unique and universal. My greatest hope is that our children, like our forefathers, will not make do with the transient and the sham, but will continue to plow the historical Jewish furrow in the field of the human spirit; that Israel will become the center of our heritage, not merely a homeland for our people; that the Jewish people will be inspired by others but at the same be to them a source of inspiration.

In the Middle East most adults are impoverished and wretched. A new scale of priorities is needed, with weapons on the bottom rung and a regional market economy at the top. Most inhabitants of the region—more than sixty percent—are under the age of eighteen.

A new future can be offered to them. Israel has computerized its education and has achieved excellent results. Education can be computerized throughout the Middle East, allowing young people to progress not just from grade to grade, but from generation to generation.

Israel's role in the Middle East should be to contribute to a great, sustained regional revival. A Middle East without wars, without enemies, without ballistic missiles, without nuclear warheads.

A Middle East in which men, goods and services can move freely without the need for customs clearance and police licenses.

A Middle East in which every believer will be free to pray in his own language—Arabic, Hebrew, Latin, or whatever language he chooses—and in which the prayers will reach their destination without censorship, without interference, and without offending anyone.

A Middle East in which nations strive for economic equality and encourage cultural pluralism.

A Middle East where every young woman and man can attain university education.

A Middle East where living standards are in no way inferior to those in the world's most advanced countries.

A Middle East where waters flow to slake thirst, to make crops grow and deserts bloom, in which no hostile borders bring death, hunger, and despair.

A Middle East of competition, not of domination. A Middle East in which men are each other's hosts, not hostages.

A Middle East that is not a killing field but a field of creativity and growth.

A Middle East that honors its history so deeply that it strives to add to it new noble chapters.

A Middle East which will serve as a spiritual and cultural focal point for the entire world.

While thanking for the Prize, I remain committed to the process. We have reached the age where dialogue is the only option for our world.

BLUEPRINT FOR PEACE

SHIMON PERES

LESSON GRADE LEVEL: 9–12
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES: PEACE;
CONFLICT RESOLUTION

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

Article 3: Right to Life, Liberty, and Personal Security

Article 17: Right to Own Property

Article 19: Freedom of Opinion and Information

Article 20: Right of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Article 26: Right to Education

Article 27: Right to Participate in the Cultural Life of Community

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- What is peace?
- What are the “pre-requisites” for peace?
- How do we ensure, or foster, these prerequisites?

TIME REQUIREMENT:

90 Minutes

OBJECTIVES:

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a nuanced understanding of Shimon Peres’ interpretation of peace.
- Create a class definition of peace.
- Develop a “blueprint for peace.”
- Use their blueprint for peace to help resolve an issue among students or the community.
- Document this process and reflect upon and modify their blueprint as needed.

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.7

VOCABULARY:

- **Accord**
- **Declaration**
- **Non-violence**
- **Dialogue**
- **Peace**
- **Conflict resolution**

CONCEPTS:

- **Global citizenship**
- **Justice**
- **Government**
- **Power**
- **Individual responsibility**

TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED:

- Computer
- Internet access

MATERIALS:

- Transcript
https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/peres-lecture.html
- Lecture
https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/peres-lecture.html
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

TEACHER TIP:

- When having students develop a class definition of peace, emphasize that “peace” is both a *product* and a *process*. That is to say, peace is a noun describing a state/condition and also a verb describing means/method of interacting.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

ANTICIPATORY SET:

- Have students sit in groups of three.
- Display an image of Shimon Peres and Yassir Arafat shaking hands at the White House (It is not important that they recognize who these people are at this point). Ask students to describe five things they see, and then to write five inferences based on these things (one inference for each descriptor).
- Facilitate a five-minute discussion based on the inferences students created in order to begin activating and engaging students' prior knowledge.
- Next, the class will create a class definition of peace.
- Ask students in groups to answer the question, "What does peace look like?" The teacher will write or project two quotes on the board to assist their thinking:
 - Alfred Nobel's will noted that one prize should go to "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses."
 - "Facts on the Nobel Peace Prizes." Nobelprize.org. 20 Jul 2011 https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/facts/peace/
 - Shimon Peres on Peace Agreements: "It is not enough to declare, you have to agree."
- List: For five minutes, direct students to come up with five or more phrases or words that address this question on full pieces of paper. (One phrase or word per piece of paper)
 - At the end of the five minutes, each group will select two and tape them to the board.
- Group: Ask students to organize the words/phrases into categories. (For example, ask: "Which of these words or phrases are similar? Which refer to the same type of thing or to a similar characteristic?") Each category will be represented by a symbol.
- Label: The students will now create a name for each group. The teacher will facilitate this process to ensure students reach an agreement on labels.
- Define: Based on the labels/groups, the class will come up with two or three definitions that synthesize key points. The teacher may need to assist in this process. Students may vote on their preferred definition.
- Display your newly created definition prominently!

ACTIVITY 1:

- Distribute copies of Shimon Peres' Nobel Lecture.
- Give groups of three students three of the articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Students will also have a graphic organizer. (Note: Teacher may need to pre-teach vocabulary or implement a vocabulary protocol to ensure students understand key words, i.e., Frayer Model...).
- Model how to complete the graphic organizer, showing how one article from the universal declaration and relates to a statement or paragraph in Shimon Peres' Nobel Lecture. Explain how you located the phrase you chose.
- Groups will spend 25-30 minutes completing the graphic organizer as the teacher moves between groups and facilitates/clarifies their work.
- Groups will write on the board one of the quotes they chose as well as their analysis.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY:

Each student will choose one of the articles they believe is very important and complete an analysis of a condition for peace (based upon the article from the UDHR they chose). Students may present this analysis in the form of an essay or poster/presentation, depending upon teacher preference.

ANALYSIS OF ONE CONDITION FOR PEACE

- 1 Does the condition for peace you chose exist in your community? Your city?
- 2 What does it look like in your community? City?
- 3 What should it look like? (A picture, description...)
- 4 Who has the power to change this? Which people/parties?
- 5 What community resources/assets are available for changing this condition?
- 6 How can you interact/influence the people/parties with the power to change this condition?
- 7 How will you access the resources needed to change this condition for peace?

BECOME A DEFENDER

Students will determine a plan of action for how they can develop or improve a “condition for peace” or “blueprint for peace” in their community. Teachers may want to provide a graphic organizer to help students organize their thinking. Teachers ought to ensure that students create benchmarks for their goal, as well as a due date. If possible, the teacher should review their progress at each benchmark and provide ongoing support as needed and upon request. The teacher must teach what a “SMART” goal is and provide examples. (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound).

The number of benchmarks and the scope of the SMART goal is contingent upon the support provided and the timeframe.

TEACHER TIP:

If your school district restricts the use of YouTube at your school, you can do the following:

- 1 Download RealPlayer onto your computer
- 2 Once you have RealPlayer you can convert YouTube videos into RealPlayer files, which you can play on your school computer or burn onto a disc.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Jewish Virtual Library:

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/>

This website provides a vehicle for the research, study, discussion and exchange of views.

Peres Center for Peace:

<http://www.peres-center.org/>

The Peres Center for Peace is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental organization founded in 1996 by President of Israel and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shimon Peres, with the aim of furthering his vision of people of the Middle East region working together to build peace through socio-economic cooperation and development, and people-to-people interaction. This website provides ample information about Peres’ vision and the organization.

Yasser Arafat Nobel Lecture:

https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1994/arafat-lecture.html

Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres’ co-awardee, delivered this lecture to the Nobel Prize Committee in 1994.

Facts about Israel:

<http://mfa.gov.il/mfa/aboutisrael/state/pages/shimon%20peres.aspx>

Information about President Peres’ political career in Israel.