

11:13 , 07.20.10



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Israeli-Palestinians Talks

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Peace of the cowards

Op-ed: Netanyahu, Palestinians ready for deal but more scared of it than ever before

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The prime minister is depressed. His spirits are low. He enters the government's conference room angry-faced and comes out even more irate. He has no joie de vivre. He finds an outlet for his distress only among his closest friends.

[Netanyahu](#) is torn. He realizes that as prime minister of Israel he has the duty to take advantage of the opportunity and quickly secure a comprehensive agreement with the Palestinians. And he is willing to pay the price. In closed-door sessions ahead of the elections he declared that he is a leader who can bring peace to Israel now.

Researcher Zaki Shalom, of the Institute for National Security Studies, recently wrote that Netanyahu sounds as though he is going above and beyond in order to embark on direct talks with the Palestinians as soon as possible, ahead of a comprehensive agreement.

Netanyahu's position is puzzling and enigmatic in Shalom's view and he attributes manipulative intentions to the PM.

Netanyahu is not in the business of manipulation, yet he faces an abyss between his mind and his emotions. From childhood, he absorbed the belief in the Greater Land of Israel. He smells its intoxicating scent every time he recalls his youth and every time he is among family.

At those junctions, his personality changes and Netanyahu turns into Bibi: The mutation known as "Bibi" is planted deep in his soul. When the divisive, zealous Bibi takes over, the rational, learned Netanyahu, a statesman willing to endorse practical compromises, shrinks and disappears. At 60 years of age, with a split personality and overcome by cognitive dissonance, Netanyahu still suffers frequent Bibi attacks. He's still scared of the Bibi within him.

In his meeting with US President Barak Obama, Netanyahu showed impressive flexibility. The PM and America's president reached almost complete agreement on the outline of an Israeli-Palestinian-Arab deal. Obama told his people that Netanyahu positively surprised him: The man seeks peace.

However, this love will not last. On his way back to Jerusalem already, Netanyahu completely changed. He turned from a leader to one being led, from an initiator to an evader, and from a bold statesman to a hesitant functionary. Bibi returned to the homeland.

Palestinian impotence

However, it would be unfair to lay the blame for a failure to reach an agreement on the Netanyahu-Bibi duo alone. The current Palestinian leadership, and especially Mahmoud Abbas and the group of longtime associates around him, insists on avoiding dialogue with Netanyahu because of its own fears.

They are scared of him, because he may offer them a peace plan they cannot refuse without losing the West's support and cannot accept without losing the Middle East's support. In the Arab world and on the Arab Street Netanyahu is disqualified, regardless of any agreement he proposes.

The de-legitimization /scare-mongering campaign led by Abbas and his comrades succeeded above and beyond expectations: Now, they are constrained by their own

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foolish propaganda, waiting for the Arab League to approve a deal – a permit they won't be receiving.

The Palestinian Authority president evades a meeting with Israel's prime minister not because they have nothing to talk about, but rather, because they do have something to talk about and a target they can reach.

A stone's throw away from realizing its historical desires, the Palestinian national movement is afflicted by severe impotence. It is fatigued and split and has little strength left for positive practical decisions. Hamas weakened its spirit and the economic prosperity quelled its zeal.

So now we have paradoxes: On the one hand, never before had we seen a Palestinian leadership so ready for a comprehensive agreement with Israel. On the other hand, never before had we seen a Palestinian leadership so scared of a deal with Israel. Meanwhile, Netanyahu was never before so ready for a peace agreement with the Palestinians. On the other hand, Netanyahu was never before so scared of a deal.

However, never before were the Jews and Arabs in the Land of Israel so scared of the possibility of a bi-national state.

[Yitzhak Rabin](#) and Yasser Arafat spoke about peace of the brave, which was not materialized. Now, the only possibility is peace of the cowards. Perhaps this kind of peace will materialize.

[Back](#)