Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu set out his vision for peace in the Middle East at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies in Bar Ilan University today, in response to US President Barack Obama's speech in Cairo last week. His address (text version) was widely anticipated by both the United States and European Union, which have pressed for the new Israeli administration to formally embrace the two-state solution, something which Netanyahu has been reluctant to do given the failures of Annapolis and the Gaza disengagement. I watched the entire speech on the BBC website and read the full transcript from the Haaretz. website in order to summarize these main points. I found that the BBC article on the event was very selective in what it reported (surprise, surprise!), concentrating mainly on the Palestinian refugee issue, the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state and the angry reaction of the Palestinian leadership to his remarks. Bibi opened his speech by making an impassioned plea for peace, saying he was willing to meet Arab leaders at any time and in any place in order to make peace. The BBC completely ignored Bibi's synopsis on the root cause of the Middle East conflict, which he states is the refusal of Arab nations to recognize Israel's right to exist and the historic link between the Jewish people and their ancient homeland. The prime minister went on to say that those who believe peace will come through Israeli withdrawals were gravely mistaken, for Hamas still calls for the ' liberation ' of cities within Israel such as Ashkelon, Haifa, Beersheva and Tiberias, and that even 'moderate' Palestinians were not prepared to recognize Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people.

Quote: *""I now am asking that when we speak of the huge challenge of peace, we must use the simplest words possible, using person to person terms. Even with our eyes on the horizon, we must have our feet on the ground, firmly rooted in truth. The simple truth is that the root of the conflict has been - and remains - the refusal to recognize the right of the Jewish People to its own state in its historical homeland. In 1947 when the United Nations proposed the Partition Plan for a Jewish state and an Arab state, the entire Arab world rejected the proposal, while the Jewish community accepted it with great rejoicing and dancing. The Arabs refused any Jewish state whatsoever, with any borders whatsoever. Whoever thinks that the continued hostility to Israel is a result of our forces in Judea, Samaria and Gaza is confusing cause and effect. The attacks on us began in the 1920s, became an overall attack in 1948 when the state was declared, continued in the 1950s with the fedaayyin attacks, and reached their climax in 1967 on the eve of the Six-Day War, with the attempt to strangle Israel. All this happened nearly 50 years before a single Israeli soldier went into Judea and Samaria.*

Netanyahu also called for the Palestinian refugee issue to be solved outside the borders of

Israel, drawing attention to the many Jewish refugees who were forced to flee Arab countries in 1948, and resettle in Israel. In addressing the establishment of the state of Israel, the prime minister said that it did not arise as a result of the holocaust, but rather from the Jewish connection with the land which has existed for over 3500 years. If the state of Israel had been established sooner, when the Jewish people were initially promised a homeland by the British government, he said the holocaust might never have occurred. On the issue of establishing a Palestinian state, Netanyahu added that it must be demilitarized, and prohibited from making military treaties with other nations such as Iran. There should be no opportunity given for a Palestinian state to transform itself into another 'Hamastan', to be used as a terrorist base to attack Israel. Netanyahu stated that Israel needed defensible borders, and that Jerusalem would remain the united capital of Israel, with territorial issues being discussed in a permanent agreement. He concluded...

Quote: *"I call upon Arab leaders and Palestinian leaders: Let's go in the path of Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, Yitzhak Rabin and King Hussein. Let's go in the path of Prophet Isaiah, who spoke thousands of years ago, they shall beat their swords into plowshares and know war no more. Let us know war no more. Let us know peace*

The speech was welcomed by US President Barack Obama, who reaffirmed his commitment to the two-state solution.

Quote: *""The President welcomes the important step forward in Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech. The President is committed to two states, a Jewish state of Israel and an independent Palestine, in the historic homeland of both peoples," Gibbs said. "He believes this solution can and must ensure both Israel's security and the fulfillment of the Palestinians' legitimate aspirations for a viable state, and he welcomes Prime Minister Netanyahu's endorsement of that goal. "The President will continue working with all parties - Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Arab states, and our Quartet partners - to see that they fulfill their obligations and responsibilities necessary to achieve a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a comprehensive regional peace."*

There are a lot of opinions being put forward by numerous people involved in this peace process. The Palestinian Authority called the speech a *" deadly blow to peace "*, objecting to Netanyahu's call for a united Jerusalem, his remarks on the refugee issue, and his demand that they recognize Israel as the homeland for the Jewish people. Right-wingers within his own government believe Netanyahu has effectively given in to pressure from the American administration to agree to the establishment of a Palestinian

state. I personally thought that Netanyahu's speech was very impressive, and my only wish is that the Palestinian Arabs could agree to make peace. But I know that will not happen, at least not before Christ has come. Believe it or not, the Bible does mention the Palestinian issue. The Lord says of Israel in Zephaniah 3:12, following the regathering of the Jewish people to the land, "

I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD

". I believe that is a reference to the Palestinian Arabs, and although they will not have a state of their own, they will live peaceably in the land and will come to trust in the Jewish Messiah. This is beginning to happen today, but it will only be fully realized during the Millennial Reign of Christ. Only then, as Bibi quotes, will the nations of the world "

beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks

", and "

nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more

", Isaiah 2:4. Only then will the world truly know peace. As someone once said, 'No Jesus, no peace - know Jesus, know peace!'. If you want to know peace in your heart, you need to get to know the one who is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7). Jesus Christ is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). He has made peace between us and God through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). And He gives this peace to all those who will believe on Him for salvation (John 14:27). Do you know peace with God? Have you experienced the forgiveness of sins? Know real peace. Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation today.

Isaiah 9:6-7

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Source YNet News , BBC , Haaretz , YNet News , BBC , YNet News , YNet News