Israel Should Offer its Own Peace Plan

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Rabbi Marc D. Angel is Director of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

An Israeli Peace Plan?

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel

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As Israel is in the midst of a bitter war, it is difficult to be thinking about a peace plan. The government of Israel is adamantly opposed to the American push for a Palestinian State. This is seen as a reward for terrorism and a betrayal of the principle of direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Agreed.

But the status quo is obviously not satisfactory, not for Israel and not for the Palestinians. Much of the world, even those countries most friendly to Israel, want to see an end to the endless conflicts in the region. The longer the war goes, the greater is the world's pressure to recognize a Palestinian State.

What if Israel came forth with a realistic peace plan of its own? What if Israel would not only agree to a Palestinian State but would be the first to recognize it? What if Israel, instead of constantly being seen as an obstruction to peace, was actually the foremost promoter of a peace plan?

The precondition of such a plan would be that Israel will only negotiate with Palestinian leadership that fully recognizes Israel’s right to exist; that commits itself to maintaining peaceful relations with Israel; that makes a concerted effort to eliminate anti-Israel and anti-Jewish propaganda, educational material. In short, Israel should very much want a peaceful neighbor free of Hamas and Hamas-like ideologies.

If the United States and its Arab allies could find and encourage such a Palestinian leadership, this would be a great blessing to Israel and the Palestinians. If Israel would produce a peace plan that would put the onus on Palestinians to agree to peace, this would be a dramatic step forward.

We pray that Israel’s current war with Hamas will end with as great a victory as possible for Israel. The victory must be not only military, but also political and diplomatic. The amazing courage and sacrifices of Tsahal are awe-inspiring. Their victory on the battlefield should be followed by victories for Israel in the areas of diplomacy and politics.

Yes, it seems highly unrealistic to find a congenial Palestinian leadership able and willing to negotiate seriously with Israel. It also seems highly unrealistic for the current Israeli government even to consider a peace gesture. But moving forward will require visionary and courageous leadership. It is easy to dismiss peace talk as being in the realm of fantasy.

David Ben Gurion is reported to have told his advisors: “We don’t need experts to tell us it’s impossible; we need experts to tell us how to achieve the impossible.” Israel has always been able to achieve the impossible in the past: it can strive to do so now.

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