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Netanyahu will be remembered for speaking Israel's truth

For at least 25 years most Israeli statesmen have been lying, misleading the world, the Israelis and themselves, until Netanyahu arose. Better late than never.

By Gideon Levy

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I would like to say thank you to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Thank you for telling the truth. Last week you were revealed as the first Israeli prime minister to tell the truth. For at least 25 years most Israeli statesmen have been lying, misleading the world, the Israelis and themselves, until Netanyahu arose – he of all statesmen – and told the truth. If only this truth had been told by an Israeli prime minister 25 years ago, maybe even 50 years ago, when the occupation was born. Still, better late than never. The public rewarded him for this truth, and Netanyahu was elected for a fourth term.

Netanyahu said last week that if he were to be reelected, a Palestinian state would not be established on his watch. Plain and simple, loud and clear. This simple, pure truth was the case for all his predecessors as well – all the prime ministers, peace lovers and justice seekers from the center and the left, who gave false promises. But who thought to admit it before him? Who had the courage to reveal the truth? The latest of these deceivers was Zionist Union leader Isaac Herzog: His daring plan included five years of negotiations. The public rewarded him for that.

After all, one had to deceive the Americans, bluff the Europeans and cheat the Palestinians, fudge things for the Mideast Quartet and lie to some Israelis. One also had to play for time, to

build settlements and get rid of every possible Palestinian partner – Yasser Arafat, who was too strong; President Mahmoud Abbas, who is too weak; and Hamas, which is too extreme. One has to play for time, so the Palestinians become more extreme and everyone understands that there's no one to talk to.

Now comes the man who is considered a bluffer, and only he tells the fateful, historic truth: there will be no Palestinian state. Not during his term, which now seems eternal. And not after it, because by then it will be too late. The end of negotiations, the end of games. No more shuttle diplomacy, Quartets, emissaries, processes, outlines, mediators and plans. That's it; it will not happen.

It had no chance from the very beginning. In Israel, there was not one single prime minister – including the two Nobel Peace Prize laureates – who intended for one second to let a Palestinian state be established. But the bluff of the century was convenient for everyone. Now Netanyahu has put an end to it.

If Israel had played its cards openly from the outset, as Netanyahu has done now, perhaps we would be in a different place, a better place.

If only Israel had told the truth: that it covets the occupied territory for itself and will never give it up; that hundreds of thousands of Jews are living there and it has no intention of evacuating them; that it does not care about international law, and cares nothing for what the whole world thinks; that the Palestinians have no rights there; that Abraham our patriarch is buried there; that Rachel our matriarch weeps there; that Israel's security depends on it, and that the Holocaust is at the door. The reasons are many and varied, and they all say one thing – now and forever, from Hebron to Jenin. Yes to autonomy, to self-administration, to village leagues or a Palestinian Authority. But no to a state. Never.

If an honest leader like Netanyahu had arisen years ago, we Israelis would have known, the Palestinians would have known, and so would the whole world: it will not be. Then it would have been possible to deal with other solutions, instead of wasting time cheating, time in which hatred only grew and blood spilled for nothing. We could have begun long ago to think of alternatives to the two-state solution – and there's only one: one state. And we could have begun debating what regime it would have – and there are only two: democracy or apartheid. Instead, we were misled.

Now Benjamin Netanyahu has come and put an end to all this. We must be grateful to him for this. History will remember that he was the first Israeli prime minister to speak the truth.