



**Empfang zum 70. Unabhängigkeitstag des Staates Israel, 19. April 2018 in Berlin**

## **Rede des Botschafters des Staates Israel, seine Exzellenz Jeremy Issacharoff**

**- Es gilt das geschriebene Wort -**

Distinguished Friends  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is my first Independence Day in Berlin and a great honour to celebrate this 70th year with you all. I welcome Ministers of the German Government, Vice Presidents and Members of the Bundestag, Presidents of Landtags, State Secretaries, Excellenzen my fellow Ambassadors, Representatives of the Bundeswehr, the German Police, the Security Services, distinguished Rabbis, leaders of the Jewish Community and all our friends joining us tonight from Berlin and other States from the length and breadth of Germany. I also welcome my colleagues from the Embassy and all my fellow Israelis visiting or living in Berlin. A personal welcome to you all.

It is a particular pleasure to welcome this evening the Honorable Heiko Maas, the Minister of Foreign Affairs who will soon address us. Over the years Minister Maas has made clear his close affinity to the Jewish people and during his recent visit to Israel just after taking office, demonstrated once again his commitment to strengthening the special relationship between our two countries.

Previously as Minister of Justice, Heiko Maas adopted an uncompromising and strident position against any form of anti-Semitism and I remember well standing in the pouring rain at the Brandenburg Gate on the first day of Chanukah when he also came and spoke against the burning of Israeli flags a few weeks before. Minister Maas thank you for being here.

I would also like to specially mention your successor and colleague Dr Katarina Barley the Minister of Justice, whom we all wish much success in her new position.

In many ways this is a celebration of 70 years, of seven decades and also now the celebration of almost four generations of an independent sovereign State of Israel. Over the last 48 hours on Yom Hazicharon ,

we remembered the immense human price that was paid in order to guarantee Israel's security and existence. Only last week we also commemorated Holocaust Remembrance Day in Bergen Belsen – where we were reminded that the survival of the Jewish people can never be taken for granted.

Many of us who have lived through these seventy years - or part of it - will never forget the successive generations of the Jewish people who strove for two thousand years to fulfill the vision of returning to Jerusalem as the Capital of Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people.

In the same way we have yearned for a homeland after so much suffering in the Diaspora, we continue to yearn for peace with all of our neighbors including the Palestinians and other Arab states in the region. We attach the highest value and importance to our peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan and will do all in our power to strengthen and enhance the ties with them both.

It is my belief that there is an unprecedented convergence of strategic interests between Israel and much of the Arab world and Israel will do its utmost to make that convergence stronger and hopefully more visible. I also believe that a new spirit of greater regional cooperation could be a vital component in restarting talks between Israel and the Palestinians in the pursuit of a crucially important negotiated political solution.

Since I have come to Germany as the Ambassador of Israel, I have learnt just how challenging this position actually is. Hardly a day goes by without seeing and feeling how our troubled past intersects with an inspiring present and a potentially dynamic future of our two peoples. Our complicated history has continued to impact our everyday lives but so have the common interests and values that both countries share.

The relationship between Israel and Germany has become a profound partnership that encompasses and spans the fields of strategy, security, diplomacy, intelligence, trade and economy, innovation, mobility, and the ever expanding area of cyber, culture, scientific research, sports and education. This breadth of cooperation is truly outstanding. It also includes joint assistance programs between Mashav of Israel and the BMZ of Germany with several African countries in the context of the Joint African Initiative.

Israel today celebrates its independence, but we do not celebrate alone and tonight we have tried to present you with a taste of all that's good in the Israeli experience. Our Independence Day is a day of great joy. It is a day for friends and families to join together and rejoice at the country we have collectively built.

International surveys have recently noted that Israelis are among the happiest people on earth. Now anyone that knows me might possibly receive the contrary impression and know how I positively overflow with happiness having dealt with Israel's strategic challenges for over three decades. Once one

of my friends wanted to write a book about me entitled "The Incredible Heaviness of Being" playing on the book title by Milan Kundera. It is still a work in progress.

Ultimately Israelis appreciate that we live in a truly beautiful country, with a high standard of living and a higher standard of purpose. Israelis can be so eloquent about complaining about the price of Milkys and other dairy products in Israel - it has almost become a national pastime - but the minute they leave Israel they count the days to when they return to their friends, families and of course their favorite home cooking.

Israelis have for years now understood the importance of a knowledge based economy that has produced so much innovation and many advanced technologies.

As the late but immortal Shimon Peres stated:

"In Israel, a land lacking in natural resources, we learned to appreciate our greatest national advantage: our minds. Through creativity and innovation, we transformed barren deserts into flourishing fields and pioneered new frontiers in science and technology."

The Jewish people in Israel and around the world have not only contributed technologically to society they have continued to contribute spiritually and philosophically to humanity. This has been the vision of our prophets and the miracle of Israel. We still have many challenges ahead of us - but tonight we celebrate and I am happy we celebrate together.

Chag Atzmaut Sameach