

President Shimon Peres

President Shimon Peres, born in Poland in 1923, immigrated to pre-State Israel in 1934. He studied in the "Geula" school in Tel Aviv and then in the Ben Shemen Agricultural School. In 1940, he was among the founders of Kibbutz Alumot, and was elected secretary of the Oved Lomed Youth Movement.

In 1947, Peres began to work together with David Ben Gurion and Levi Eshkol in the Hagana Command, and continued to work with them after the founding of the State of Israel. In 1949, Peres was appointed the head of a Defense Ministry delegation to the United States for the purchase of military equipment for the new state. In 1950, he was appointed the temporary head of the IDF Naval forces. In 1952, Peres was appointed deputy director general of the Defense Ministry, and one year later, he became the director general. In 1955, after Egyptian President Nasser signed an arms deal with Czechoslovakia, Peres helped to develop close diplomatic ties with France which also viewed Nasser as an enemy.

In 1959, Peres was responsible for the establishment of the nuclear reactor in Dimona. He also was instrumental in the development of the Israeli arms industries and Israeli Aircraft Industries.

Peres began his political career in 1959 when he was elected to the Fourth Knesset on the Mapai list. He was appointed Deputy Minister of Defense and held that position until 1965. That year, he split off from Mapai with Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, and other MKs and established the Rafi party. During the Sixth Knesset, Rafi joined other parties to form the Alignment, and Peres was elected to the Seventh Knesset with the Alignment. He then served in various ministerial positions in Golda Meir's government.

When Golda Meir resigned, Peres ran against Yitzhak Rabin for Alignment Leadership. Rabin won the leadership, and when he became Prime Minister in 1974, he appointed Peres as the Defense Minister. During his tenure in this position, he oversaw the reorganization of the IDF after the Yom Kippur War, the Interim Agreement was signed with Egypt (1975), the Entebbe Rescue took place (1976), and the Good Fence with Lebanon was established. He also permitted the establishment of Elon Moreh, the first settlement in the West Bank following the Six-Day War.

Before the elections to the Ninth Knesset, Shimon Peres became the head of the Alignment. The results of those elections put the Alignment into the opposition where Peres led the party until 1984.

The 1984 elections to the Eleventh Knesset ended in a draw. The Alignment and Likud formed a National Unity Government based on the principle of rotation. Peres served as Prime Minister in the years 1984-1986. Yitzhak Shamir, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs, switched positions with Peres in 1986. In 1987, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peres concluded the London Agreement (for the convening of a Middle East Peace Conference) with King Hussein of Jordan, but the agreement was never

approved by the Inner Government Cabinet.

The draw of the 1988 elections also brought about the establishment of a National Unity Government. Shamir served as Prime Minister and Peres as Finance Minister. In 1990, Peres brought down the government because of the deadlock in the peace process, but failed to establish an alternative coalition. Shamir ended up forming the government from a narrow coalition which remained in place until the 1992 elections.

Rabin won the Labor Party primaries and then the 1992 elections and became Prime Minister. He appointed Peres as Vice Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Cooperation between Peres and Rabin brought about the signing of the Oslo Agreements with the PLO. In 1994, Peres received the Nobel Prize for Peace with Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Following Yitzhak Rabin's assassination in 1995, Peres became Prime Minister and Defense Minister until the elections in 1996 for the 14th Knesset. Those elections were the first (out of three) direct elections for the Prime Minister, and Binyamin Netanyahu defeated Peres by a small margin. Later that year, Peres established the Peres Center for Peace to further the peace process through economic and social agreements with the Palestinians.

In 1997, Ehud Barak took over leadership of the Labor Party, and won the direct elections for Prime Minister in 1999. He appointed Peres as the Minister for Regional Cooperation.

Following the resignation of President Ezer Weizman in 2000, Peres ran for president of the state and ceded to Moshe Katsav.

In 2001, Ariel Sharon triumphed over Ehud Barak in the direct elections for the Prime Minister. Sharon invited the Labor Party to join his government, and Peres (who was the acting chairman of the Labor Party) became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. The following year, the Labor Party left the government, and Amram Mitzna was elected chairman of the Labor Party. In the Sixteenth Knesset, Peres continued to serve in the Knesset in the opposition, and following Mitzna's resignation from the Labor Party leadership, Peres once again became Acting Chairman. In January 2005, after the withdrawal of Ariel Sharon's coalition partners, Peres joined Sharon's government and became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Regional Cooperation. Later that year, after Amir Peretz won the primaries and became the Chairman of the Labor Party, Peres switched his allegiance to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon who established the new Kadima party.

Following the elections for the Sixteenth Knesset, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert appointed Peres as Vice Premier and Minister for the Development of the Negev and Galil.

On June 13, 2007, Peres was elected the ninth President of the State of Israel.

Peres's numerous publications include the following books: *The Next Step* (1965),

David's Sling (1970), *Entebbe Diary* (1991), *The New Middle East* (1993), and *Battling for Peace* (1995)