

Personal Reflections from Sandy Koppell Women's League NGO

The September 22, 2016 General Assembly of the United Nations

Sometimes you are granted a gift. For me this gift was being able to be able to attend a meeting of the General Assembly at the United Nations. Not only was it a privilege to attend, I was honored to be there when both President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke.

By now this is old news. You have heard what they said. It was discussed in newspapers, on the internet and particularly the Jewish press, but being there, and seeing this unfold was surreal.

Palestinian Territory President Mahmoud Abbas opened his remarks in the name of God and peace. He would like to sue Great Britain, since they had no right to give the Jews Palestine. The United Nations had no right to recognize Israel as a homeland for the Jews. He claimed Israel violated the partition plan and seized more land. He spent his entire time speaking against Israel. Israel has humiliated them. Of course, he wants east Jerusalem back and railed on about the blockade of Gaza by the Israelis. His entire speech was spent lambasting Israel. There was huge applause from the floor of the assembly at the end of his speech and then an exodus by delegates on the assembly floor.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke after a buffer speaker put in between him and Abbas. I heard so many positive things he had to say, I was bursting with my Jewish pride. He feels that within ten years, and maybe sooner, Israel will no longer be a pariah at the United Nations. Israel has shared its expertise with many of the member nations on important issues. They have partnered with many nations against terrorism. They have the best technology for intelligence. Israel leads the world in waste water recycling. They have tremendous agricultural know-how. Israel is being recognized for the contributions it can make. They have made inroads in working with several Arab nations. They have stable relations with Jordan and Egypt and other Arab countries see them as an ally against Iran and Isis. When he mentioned the deep friendship with the United States, there was thunderous applause from the balcony where I was sitting. His comment, "I don't usually get applause at the UN." He invited President Abbas to come and address the Knesset and he would come to address the Palestinian Parliament in Ramallah. He said of Iran, Israel cannot allow them to develop nuclear weapons. Not now. Not in a decade. Not ever.

At the end of his speech, the balcony gave him a standing ovation and then emptied out. He is a charismatic speaker and filled me with pride as a Jew and a supporter of Israel.