

[from "**The Territorial Aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian Permanent Status Negotiations**" – Ron Pundak and Shaul Arieli]

The Stockholm channel

About four months were wasted until Barak decided to return to the negotiation table his confidant, attorney Gilad Sher, and team him up with Minister Shlomo Ben Ami. The two, along with a small group of consultants, became a sophisticated and efficient team whose views were more advanced than that of the Prime Minister. In retrospect, it transpires that these two did influence Barak yet were not able to lead him to the critical point in the framework of territorial negotiations. The beginning of the month of May 2000 marked the "next stage" of the negotiations between the parties and the establishment of a secretive and official negotiation venue that was later known by the name "the Stockholm channel." The secret talks, which took part in Jerusalem at first and later on in Sweden, resulted in a significant progress in all areas of negotiation including, of course, the territorial ones, and the Israeli consent to talk about a Palestinian state. In the framework of these negotiations, a progress means an Israeli acceptance of the Palestinian "100% minus" formula on the one hand, and a Palestinian willingness to properly address some of Israel's needs, on the other hand.

Barak's inclination was to hold to the "three zones" doctrine, namely the "brown," "white," and "green" zones, and agree to a settlement in the framework of which the "green" zone is slated as an area whose fate is decided later on, at least five years following the signature of the agreement. Already at this point, the head of IDF Intelligence Branch presented the Intelligence position according to which Palestinians may agree to an Israeli annexation of an area that does not exceed 5%-6% of the West Bank. Barak ignored this position and, prior to leaving for Stockholm, he instructed his team to offer the Palestinians a state on 77% of the area only with an Israeli annexation of 13%-15% without making any reciprocal gesture along with an understanding that the fate of 8%-10% of the area will be negotiated after signing the agreement. In actuality the Palestinians were presented with a map that included 76.6% of the area to the Palestinians, 10.1% held by Israel under a special status, and 13.3% of the area annexed to Israel. When the Israeli team began presenting the aforesaid plan to the Palestinians, they encountered an angry Palestinian partner that claimed that Israel returned to day 1 of the negotiations. Abu Alaa claimed that "this

kills the desire to proceed," and reiterated the pragmatic Palestinian position: "the 1967 borderlines constitute the border...we will be willing to make minor adjustments in these borders provided that they are mutually equal in quality and area." Hasan Asfur said they were willing to make changes but not willing to accept a unilateral annexation while Abu Alaa maintained that there was no justification that the Palestinians would receive less than one hundred percent of the area. The Palestinians made it clear that the "one hundred percent" deal might include the annexation of concentrated settlement clusters in the West Bank and Jewish neighborhoods in east Jerusalem.

Upon its return to Israel, the Israeli negotiations team reported the results to the Prime Minister. Consequently, one of the instructions Barak gave was to prepare new maps in which the settlements Beit El and Ofra would be connected, as well as Baal-Hazor and Psagot, to the areas annexed to Israel as settlement clusters. In terms of the Palestinians, the meaning was the formation of an Israeli geographic panhandle leading from the Jerusalem area to the eastern parts of Ramallah when in actuality this panhandle is connected to the geographic cluster located in the south and forms an area that not only blocks east Jerusalem but also blocks the cities of Al-Bireh and Ramallah. Beyond the desire to please the settlers of Beit El and Ofra, known as the traditional, ideological core of the Gush Emunim movement, this annexation made very little geographic or territorial sense. The Palestinians saw this move as another act that was intended to restrict the development of their future state and, to a certain extent, even to humiliate them, mainly by leaving Psagot - that is visible from almost every point in Al-Bireh - and leaving Ofra - that is visible from the northern and eastern neighborhoods of Ramallah.

The deep and profound territorial gaps remained during the following meeting that took place in Sweden on May 20th, 2000. The Palestinian team reclaimed that they would not agree, under any circumstances to an Israeli annexation of 13%, and that they would not accept the Israeli notion of dominance over areas by means of "special arrangements" (the "green" zone), which from their point of view consists of additional Israeli annexation under a different name. The Palestinians repeated and clarified their claim since the Beilin-Abu Mazen agreement, that occupants that will remain in a Palestinian area can do so as individuals and not as communities. They would be Israeli citizens under Palestinian sovereignty with special arrangements in issues such as education, culture and the like.

Five days earlier, the Prime Minister gave a political statement which was previously confirmed by the government at the assembly. The statement concerned the status modification of three villages in the Jerusalem area (Abu-Dis, El-Azaria and Eastern Swahara) from status B to status A. The change in the area is not one of essence and its main implication is that the security authority is transferred to the Palestinian police which was already situated in these villages. At the same day, many severe Palestinian demonstrations took place throughout the Judea, Samaria and Gaza regions, noting the Palestinian *Nakba* (the calamity) as a result of the war in the area during 1947-9. The demonstrations acted as a focal point of the Palestinian public's rage and frustration against the occupation, the deterioration in their financial state, the fact that prisoners who were supposed to be released according to agreements were not released, and their daily hardships.

There was still tension in the area for a few days and during the two "days of wrath" (May 19-20) that were announced by the Palestinians, there were many riots with numerous casualties including about a hundred Palestinians and a number of Israeli soldiers. In response, Barak ordered the negotiation team to return from Sweden and announced that he will not transfer to the Palestinians the authority over the three villages, which were eventually never transferred to the Palestinians. The Palestinians argue to this day that this decision made by Barak characterizes his negotiation perception, which was – according to their point of view – a sequence of words and nice promises, while in practice no act was taken in order to prove his positive intentions. In this context they also mention Barak's statements – which are perceived by them in the best case as merely arrogant, and in the worst case as a strategic perception – that contrary to Rabin, Peres and Netanyahu, he was the only Prime Minister who did not transfer areas to the Palestinians.

During the first three days of June, a reinforced "Stockholm Team" was gathered for a number of prolonged sessions in Jerusalem. The Palestinians did not waiver their positions on the territorial issue, or on any other issue. Abu-Alaa repeated and stressed to Minister Ben-Ami that "Arafat wants an agreement." On the territorial issue he repeated again that annexation of 13% is very excessive and asked the Israelis to come up with a more moderate offer, based on the fact that the total area of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank is not more than 2% of the territory. "Present

a more realistic approach regarding the occupation clusters and offer land swaps."^[5] The Israeli response was criticism over the fact that the Palestinians did not make any concrete offer regarding the territorial issue.

The gap between the amount of the settlement's built area, which is actually less than 2% of the West Bank's area, and the amount of area that Israel demanded to annex pursued both sides throughout the negotiations. The gap began to minimize only six months later, when Clinton's layout was dispatched. The dispute was based on two opposing perceptions: Israel aspired to annex as much area as possible with no unequivocal relevance to pronounced international interests, while the Palestinians aspired to exclude Israel of as much area as possible, regardless of the Israeli requirement to retain not only a large number of settlements in the West Bank, but also to include them in clusters with urban ability to spread and expand, and with comfortable connecting roads for transportation.

That turned the question of annexing percentages of the West Bank's areas into a discussion that was very much unrealistic. Different settlements were taken in and out of the annexation maps with no logic. The Hinanit Shaked cluster in Northern Samaria for example, was erased from the maps, and the long panhandle to Psagot and Beit-El was added. Furthermore, the greater the reduction of the annexed area, the more differing interests began to blend. Instead of drawing a clear and minimalistic map, based on territorial logic at the light of which both sides can direct their activity, the Israeli side insisted upon integrating into the annexed area large areas that have no settlements on them, for the benefit of the unclear future development of Maale Edumim for example, which would block the development of the future Palestinian capital at the same time. Similarly, there was a clash in the interests of the strict security perceptions, which strived to annex more territory close to the green borderline in order to expand Israel's "narrow waist" in contrast with those who saw greater need in expanding the settlement clusters and including more settlements. Again and again the map planners were caught between the hammer and the anvil, not to mention that the Prime Minister's dictation which promised the public to include 80% of the occupants in the annexed area, made drawing "the ultimate map" even more difficult.

^[5]Ibid, p.112.

On the last day of the meeting, Abu-Alaa has clarified to the Israelis the fundamental importance of the territorial issue and its impact on the negotiations. From his point of view the Israeli offer to the Palestinians at that time was the same as the one that preceded it six months earlier in the formal talks that took place in Eilat and lead nowhere. "As long as there is no agreement on the borders" he said, "we will not agree to move forward with the drafts or with any other issue."^[6] This key sentence was not absorbed deep enough in the consciousness of Israel's decision maker.

Still, both Ben-Ami and Gilad Sher understood the Palestinian requirement to present a deal which consists of the implicit number of 100%, and to reach a preliminary agreement regarding the land swap principle that would make it easier on the Palestinians to agree to the Israeli annexation of the settlement clusters. However, the Prime Minister was not willing to internalize this. Barak, who wanted to offer the Palestinians a 50:50 ratio share of the West Bank area at the beginning, kept holding on to his "golden formula" (so called by the team) that included Israeli annexation of 650 square kilometers of the areas, which was presented by the Israeli side in Camp David as an Israeli retreat deal from 89.5%, with no land swaps. Barak derived the percentage induction not from the West Bank area, as was usually done, but from the entire sum of the West Bank and Gaza Strip's areas, and by that he seemingly reduced the percentage.

The issue of percentage estimation should be shortly discussed and explained, since there are a variety of reference points for their estimation, and in many cases the numbers are meant to throw dust in the eyes. The percentage issue began with the assignment of the interim agreement and the phased strategy, when arguments regarding the percentage measurements have already begun. Varying solutions were given to the questions whether the total sum of the area includes the Dead Sea, the demilitarized areas and the annexed East Jerusalem. Israel did not include Jerusalem and the quarrel areas along the green borderline in the percentage estimations, so that each percentage included less area. The negotiation's percentage method was misleading from the start. The percentages caused dread of numbers and distorted reality. Israel should not have negotiated like a peddler in the market and should not have carried out a redundant trade-in on tactic positions when it was clear to both

^[6]Ibid, p.115.

sides that they have no place in the essential discussion. It was a mistake to argue about percentages, instead of predefining areas on the map and fighting over truly essential interests.

It is important to mention that the total area in discussion is relatively small, and in terms of Israel's essential interests, one or two percentages do not make much of a difference. Every percentage in the West Bank consists of 55 square kilometers, and if the Palestinians agreed on minimal Israeli annexation on the one hand, and the Israelis agreed on certain amount of land swaps on the other hand, then the optimal path to an agreement had to go through and by way of the one hundred percent agreement. As aforesaid however, such deal was never offered to the Palestinians, neither in Camp David, nor in Taba or later on.

In Preparations to Camp David

In the weeks that preceded the Camp David conference, and during the preceding discussions the Palestinian negotiators understood that the Israelis are refusing to approach the one hundred percent deal. Hasan Asfur who was the group's optimist at the beginning, addressed the Israeli team and said: "You the Israelis kill our honor, and no one will stop us from dying with our honor. Place yourselves in our stead. Don't kill our hope, our future."^[7] The Israeli team may have been able of understanding Asfur's authentic call, but the prospects of the Prime Minister's addressing the other side's honor, or placing himself in their stead and acting accordingly were low.

The preliminary discussions in the United States, which took place four weeks before the Camp David conference, and was participated by both teams, indicated the anticipated calamity. During the discussions, Abu-Alaa addressed Ben-Ami and said that Israel should deal with the Palestinians in the same manner that they dealt with the Syrians, the Egyptians and the Jordanians, "No more and no less. Otherwise, the summit will be a disaster, a catastrophe." Gilad Sher's response was that they should not mislead themselves, since "The final map will be very much similar to the one you have seen." Their reaction was short and clear: they will not accept the map.^[8] The writing was on the wall. If Israel does not change its territorial perception in the negotiations, the summit will fail utterly.

^[7]Ibid, page 115.

^[8]Ibid, p.125.

A few days later, the Israeli team met Arafat in Nablus, with the purpose of sweetening the pill and preparing for the summit. Ben-Ami explained to Arafat that the Israeli starting point was previously only a 50% retreat from the area, and now it is 87%, and that Israel will retreat immediately from 76% of said area. He added that the sides will continue to negotiate the 13% that Israel wishes to annex. Arafat did not respond. When the Israeli team reported Barak of the meeting, Barak clarified that Israel should aspire to hold the Jordan Valley for thirty years, and every decade an examination will be made in order to check the possibility of transferring parts of it to the Palestinians.^[9] The implication of this for the Palestinians was that their state will practically be reduced to merely 75%.

The preparations for Camp David accelerated. On the eve of the summit the main Israeli message for the Palestinians, which was taken across by varying means was that Arafat must understand that from Barak's point of view the conference is based on two foundations: the first is that IT'S NOW OR NEVER, and the second, that it's EVERYTHING OR NOTHING. The Palestinians felt trapped in an ultimatum, especially for the difficult and complicated relations between the two leaders. Barak did not trust Arafat and Arafat did not believe Barak. Each of the two had sufficient reasons to hold on to their initial position.

The Israeli step "towards" the Palestinians between the Stockholm discussions and the Camp David conference decreased the Israeli annexation from 13% to 11%. This change, which seemed essential to the Israeli side, made no impact on the Palestinians. In their view, the Israeli position was still excessive, especially since Israel continued with its perception that additional 10%, most of which are in the Jordan Valley, will be held by Israel for an uncertain amount of time. According to Ben-Ami, Abu-Alaa agreed to the annexation of only 4%.^[10]

The false perception that characterized the Israeli decision makers regarding negotiation leeway on the territorial issue seemed even bigger, now that it was known that both evaluations of the IDF Intelligence Branch and of the Israeli delegation's intelligence officer to Camp David established that "it is possible to reach an agreement with Arafat under these conditions: a Palestinian state with Eastern [Arab] Jerusalem as its capital, sovereignty over the Temple Mount, 97% of the Bank and land swap on a 1:1 ratio regarding the remaining area, a certain version that includes

^[9]Ibid, pp.2—140.

^[10]Oded Granot, *Maariv*, April 6th 2001, from Shlomo Ben-Ami's Journal.

recognition in Israel's liability for the refugee problem and willingness to accept 20 or 30 thousand refugees."^[11] Furthermore, according to General Malka, a few weeks prior to Camp David he reviewed Arafat's positions for the Cabinet and said that "there is no chance that Arafat will settle for 90% of the areas, not even 93%." According to Malka, Barak's response was "You say that if I offer 90% he would not take it? I do not accept your assessment." Malka was persistent and told the Prime Minister that "there is no chance that he would take it." Malka adds that "Barak viewed himself as an evaluator who needs no intelligence evaluations, since he viewed himself as intelligence, and he thought that he was smarter. Later it was easier for him to explain his failure by giving a false description of the events."^[12]

The Camp David Negotiations

The Palestinians were taken to Camp David against their wishes. The IDF Intelligence Branch knew and agreed with the Palestinian assessment that the conference was not properly prepared and that the positions of the two sides are too far apart to reach an agreement. The summit began on July 10th 2000, lasted longer than was scheduled, and ended on July 25th. This is not the place to discuss the many reasons for the conference's failure.^[13] Still we feel a duty to emphasize that placing all the blame on the Palestinian side alone, is a complete falsification of the facts.

The territorial issue could have been the accelerator that would have carried the entire negotiations process to signing the framework agreement for a peace settlement. This is what the Palestinians were expecting. But things were conducted differently. Some of the senior Israeli negotiators realized, or were aware of the fact, that it was very important for the Palestinians to show that they received back all the areas that Israel has conquered on 1967, and that from their point of view it was imperative that they would be able to claim that they received in their peace agreement no less than Egypt and Jordan did – meaning, 100% of the area. This understanding or knowledge did not influence the Israeli delegation's essential position in any way. Barak's refusal was fundamental, with no clear logic or reason: the Palestinians will not receive 100% of the area. Minister Ben-Ami reinforced him

^[11]Amos Malka, previous Chief of the IDF Intelligence Branch, *HaAretz*, June 2004, on an interview with the reporter Akiva Eldar.

^[12]*Ibid.*

^[13]See on the subject: Dr. Ron Pundak, *From Oslo to Taba: What Went Wrong?*, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Davis Institute, October 2001.

when he announced to the Palestinian team in the presence of President Clinton that "We cannot consent to the requirement to agree on the principle of the '1967 borders' and then talk."^[14]

Ben-Ami did agree with Barak, but he was surprised to realize how Barak's reaction to an American memo that included the perception that the starting point is the 1967 borders "was unnecessarily hysterical, and especially unproductive" in Ben-Ami's words. Ben-Ami also offered Barak to give the Americans a "deposit" regarding the 1967 borders issue, like Yitzchak Rabin's deposit of the Golan Heights, but Barak opposed to this idea as well.^[15]

The gap between the two parties regarding the territorial issue was enormous. Head of the Palestinian arena in the IDF Intelligence Branch research regiment at the time, Colonel (reserve) Efraim Lavie, gave the decision makers a clear picture of the Palestinian position, according to which "Arafat and the Palestinian leadership intend to see the political process through, aiming to reach a solution of two states, according to the firm and well known Palestinian political position that was decided upon by the P.L.O. on 1988: a state with the 1967 borders, including the Arab Jerusalem, according to UN's resolutions 242 and 338." The IDF Intelligence Branch has emphasized then that "the issue of territory is the most essential issue for the Palestinians whereas the right of return is an important trading card against Israel."^[16]

The Americans also displayed a decent amount of incompetence. Instead of placing memos and mediation offers and removing them instantly as a result of Barak's pressure, and instead of being dragged by Israeli dictations and according to Barak's negotiation method, the Americans could, for example, take the map and the territorial principles of the Beilin-Abu Mazen agreement that they had into their hands, and place them as the negotiation's starting point. This plan, which was finally agreed upon on November 1st 1995, offered the annexation of settlement clusters in an area of less than 250 square kilometers (4.5% of the area) on the West Bank, which include 75% of the occupants for a territorial reciprocal gesture of 1:1 ratio in the area of Haluza Sands, which is connected to the Gaza Strip. Abu-Mazen himself, who saw the map and even corrected parts of it – estimated then that if the Israeli government

^[14]Granot, *Maariv*, April 6th 2001, from Shlomo Ben-Ami's journal.

^[15]Shlomo Ben-Ami, *A Front Without a Rearguard: a Voyage to the Boundaries of the Peace Process*, Yedioth Ahronoth Publication, 2004, pp. 143, 154.

^[16]Colonel (reserve) Efraim Lavie, *HaArets*, June 13th 2004, on an interview with Yoav Stern.

will accept the plan, it will be possible to sign an agreement of principles within a month of intensive negotiations.^[17]

The Israeli opening suggestion that was placed on the conference table in Camp David included the annexation of 13% of the area and the holding of an additional area of about 10% for many years, meaning, a Palestinian state on about 77% of the West Bank area and most of the Gaza Strip. **(Map number 2)** Before the teams began negotiating the territorial issue, Barak instructed his team in a manner that led the negotiations into crisis. He concluded unequivocally: "no land swaps."^[18]

As aforementioned, few members of the Israeli delegation understood that there is no chance of reaching any agreement with no land swaps. Professional works were prepared in order to locate relevant areas within the green borderline, to be transferred to the Palestinians. These delegation members wrongly believed that Barak is saving this waiver for the last minute of the negotiations.

But Barak persisted. The first week's deliberations on the territorial issue kept running aground. "There is no surprise" says Ben-Ami, "that the territory deliberations ended in calamity. We had no ammunition to put the negotiation wheels into motion. We were not authorized to offer a formula regarding the 1967 borders or the Eastern border, meaning the Jordan Valley."^[19] According to Ben-Ami, Barak thought that by presenting strong nerves he will break the Palestinians, "and that was the crucial mistake of this conference and of his entire concept of making peace."^[20]

The Palestinians, on their part, did not offer wide space for maneuvering in the territorial negotiations, but many in the Israeli team say in retrospect that they themselves did not make it easier on them. Ben-Ami explicitly states and acknowledges that in the same famous meeting where "the President (Clinton) has turned the table on Abu-Alaa" and blamed the Palestinians with lack of "good faith," the Israelis presented a new map "that showed explicit deterioration in comparison with our previous maps. Ehud added to this map additional 3% of annexation and annexation panhandles at the heart of the Bank in order to include Kdumim, Ali, Beit-El and Ofra. I was not whole with the map I was presenting, although I followed Ehud's instructions of course." Ben-Ami noted for himself in his memoirs: "I don't

^[17]About the Beilin-Abu-Mazen Plan, see Yossi Beilin's book, *Touching Peace*, Yedioth Ahronoth Publishers, 1997, pp.165—207.

^[18]Sher, *ibid*, p.160.

^[19]Shlomo Ben-Ami, *ibid*, p.155.

^[20]*Ibid*.

understand where Barak is striving. Does he want to block any chance for peace? What is the ingenious strategy here? According to Barak's way of thinking, the Prime minister thought that by presenting a map which is harsher, he will coerce the Palestinians to agree to the previous one. Even Ben-Ami admits that it was an unnecessary outwitting, and that this summit was not to be decided by transparent tactics.^[21]

According to the American sources, after a week, and due to severe American pressures of the Presidential level, Arafat agreed to an Israeli annexation of 8%. The Palestinian condition was that Israel will transfer to the Palestinians in return areas within the green borderline, and that the issue of Jerusalem will be solved in a manner that will see their position through in the issue of sovereignty over Haram-a-Sharif / the Temple Mount. In retrospect it became evident that Arafat renounced this statement, probably as a result of his understanding that Barak does not accept the solution that was offered for Jerusalem and is not willing to accept the principle of land swaps, and if it was implied that he may agree to it, than it was obvious that the deal will not be a fair one of 1:1 ratio. According to the reports, the Americans offered that the reciprocal gesture will be of only about 2%, although Barak's position to his team remained unrelenting: no land swaps.

Barak also had throughout the summit an uncomprehended requisition, not only to the Palestinians, but also to the Israelis. For some reason he insisted upon the annexation of a small area northern to the Gaza Strip, instead of leaving the Strip entirely. Even Gilad Sher noted in his book that this requisition "was unnecessary and puzzling in my opinion."^[22]

Four days before the conference ended, in the borders and territory committee meeting, the Palestinians presented for the first time a map that presented their position in this essential issue. Prior to this, the Israeli team repeated Barak's requisition, according to which Israel requires the annexation of 650 square kilometers (more than 11%) in order to include 80% of the occupants on the settlement clusters on the West Bank. The main problem with the map, according to the Israelis, was that the annexation area was limited. According to Gilad Sher the area was limited to 2.5%, and according to a Palestinian member of the negotiations it was not more than 1.4%.

^[21]Ben-Ami, *ibid*, pp.114—162.

^[22]Sher, *ibid*, p.167.

The settlements on the map had no connection to Israel through clusters with territorial reserves, but through dominance of the roads alone, or as the map was named by the Israelis "balloons and strings." On a separate map, the Palestinians presented the areas that they wish to accept as a reciprocal gesture within the framework of the land swaps. The map presented significant progress and graphically clarified for the first time that the principle of annexation and land swaps is acceptable by the Palestinians. Still, the Israelis clarified justifiably that the Palestinian perception of "balloons and strings" is unfeasible, not to mention the fact that it does not include all those settlements that Israel wished to annex dipper in the Palestinian autonomic area.

On that same day, the Israeli team presented the Palestinians with a map,^[23] according to which the area that will be immediately transferred to the Palestinians will reach 77.2%, the area that will be transferred after a few years will be 8.8%, so that the Israeli annexation will be of 13.3%, and a few more tenths of the percent remained controversial in practice. This was actually a more rigid position than before, although it was explained to the Palestinians during the talks that the annexation will "only" include 11%—11.5%. According to Minister Dan Meridor, who participated in the summit, "the maps that were presented in Camp David retained 17% in our possession. Later 10.5% were discussed. The most far-reaching was 10.5%." According to his opinion "Even this was too minimal. And I do not agree to land swaps."^[24]

In any event, this area of annexation included about a hundred thousand Palestinians, in addition to more than two hundred thousand Palestinians, Jerusalem residents, whose status was yet to be determined. The Palestinian position, on the other hand, demanded that no Palestinian population be left under Israeli authority. Not only that, the Israeli map practically divided the Palestinian state into four cantons, three of which are on the West Bank, dissected by Israeli domination strips from west to east.^[25]

Towards the end of the conference, the two parties still tried to promote the territorial issue on informal "hallway conversations." According to varying reports, one of the Palestinian delegation members "agreed" to an Israeli annexation of 7.5%,

^[23]Sher, *ibid*, p.203.

^[24]An interview with Dan Meridor, *HaAretz* appendix, March 21st 2003.

^[25]The Camp David map as it appears in the presentation of the Palestinian design office, August 2002.

and another to a 3% annexation. Another Palestinian offer in the sense of a trial balloon was to an Israeli annexation of 8% for 4% of land swaps and a territorial passage between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank through Israel with full Palestinian authority. The Americans claimed to the Palestinians that the maximal Israeli offer will include the annexation of 9% and a reciprocal gesture of 1%. In any case, the retrospective version that was presented by the Israeli spokesmen, according to which Barak offered in Camp David a Palestinian state over 95% and a territorial reciprocal gesture of 5%, or alternately 97% and additional 3% of reciprocal gesture, is rewriting history. Barak himself said on a journalistic interview that he agreed in Camp David to transfer to the Palestinians between 90—91% of the West bank area for land swaps of 1% from within the green borderline, and that he never agreed to transfer the Jordan Valley.^[26] Still, Barak's final formal offer to President Clinton was a Palestinian state on 89% of the area with an overhead passage that will connect the Strip to the West bank. A day before the summit ended the Israeli side still held on to its official position from the beginning of the summit. The last perception that was presented to President Clinton included again the annexation of 650 square kilometers and the principle of no land swaps. This gap between Barak's position and the Palestinian bargaining position was so large that it did not enable them to seriously proceed within the negotiations.

^[26]An interview to *Newsweek* and the *Washington Post*, as quoted by *Yedioth Ahronoth*, July 15th 2001.