

SHALOM! SALAAM!

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The following dialogue comes from a tape which records the clinching negotiation session between Palestinian and Israeli officials in Oslo, Norway. Strangely, all sentences are English palindromes; they read the same backwards as frontwards.

We do not know the identity of any of the participants, but it is likely that the person references as 'Abba' is the head of the Palestinian contingent.

The scene opens tensely. The Palestinians want Yasser Arafat to be the signatory of the peace accord in Washington. This proposal is anathema to some of the Israeli negotiators, who regard Arafat as a terrorist and haven't forgotten his support for Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War. After some wrangling, it is agreed that PLO lieutenant Mahmoud Abbas will sign the peace agreement on behalf of the Palestinians.

Although we don't know who is speaking, we can surmise from the context whether the speaker is an Israeli or a Palestinian. I have designated the Israeli speaker as (I) and the Palestinian as (P).

(I) Bar Arafat, a far Arab.

(P) No, it is opposition!

(I) Had a fit? Nix Intifadah!

(I) Drat Saddam, all its evil alive, still a mad dastard!

(P) Drat Sabra, bar bastard?

(P) Rabin, I bar!

(I) Nag a placid Arab and nab a radical pagan!

(P) Liven a mood; doom an evil.

(I) Abbas, Abba.

(P) Semite, be sure no one ruse betimes.

(P) Gaza zag?

(I) No Gaza zag on.

(P) Won't revert now?

(P) Won't fool PLO oft, now?

(I) No partner entrap on.

(I) Live wartime did emit raw evil.

(P) Snug, raw was I ere I saw war guns.

(I) Are we not drawn onward, we Jews, drawn onward to new era?

(I) Now, we won!

(P) Now, sir, a war is won!