

# And the Exhibit A of an old Russian proverb is...



by Lev Tsitrin

**It stands to reason** that views of a journalist who “won three Pulitzer Prizes [and is] the author of seven books, including [some that] won the National Book Award” and has 40-plus years of foreign policy experience should be listened to in awe. And yet, consider this, quoted from his recent op-ed titled “[\*Biden Is Weighing a Big Middle East Deal\*](#)” that is dedicated to the possible Saudi–Israeli normalization deal:

I believe that, at a minimum, the Saudis and Americans could (and should) demand four things from Netanyahu for such a huge prize as normalization and trade with the most

important Arab Muslim state:

- An official promise not to annex the West Bank – ever.
- No new West Bank settlements or expansion outward of existing settlements.
- No legalization of wildcat Jewish settlement outposts.
- And transferring some Palestinian populated territory from Area C in the West Bank (now under full Israeli control) to Areas A and B (under Palestinian Authority control) – as provided for in the Oslo accords.

In return, the Palestinian Authority would have to endorse Saudi Arabia's peace deal with Israel.

For anyone who follows the goings-on in the Middle East, this is as bonkers as it gets: after trying to sideline Palestinians, the perpetual spoilers whose only dream is the destruction of Israel, either through peaceful means of demographic dominance, or through violent means of war and terrorism, who rejected, time and again, every attempt to settle the conflict – and starting to succeed via the Abraham Accords, pamper the Palestinian obstructionists by giving them the veto power over the dawning hope of peace between Israel and the wider Arab and Islamic world!

This does not come from an admissions essay to a kindergarten, and its jaw-dropping naivety cannot be attributed to the tender age of the writer who will surely wise up with age. No, this is coming – try not to fall from off your chair – from the *New York Times*, and is the product of life-long wisdom of its star reporter and columnist, Thomas Friedman!

Perhaps I am unfair to the good old Tom: maybe it is not his fault; maybe he is simply becoming senile – and senility is another infancy, of course. Or perhaps I should be lenient to him because an old dog cannot learn new tricks, and having been raised in the age of the Oslo hope, Mr. Friedman cannot abandon it. He just cannot let the empirical experience of Oslo's spectacular failure that took the form of Palestinian

suicide bombings during the Intifada that killed over a thousand Israelis and maimed several thousands more, and afterwards, of rockets coming from Gaza, to alter his deep-seated views. Some convictions are just too sacred, and cannot be dislodged by mere facts, so the mind like Mr. Friedman's – or whatever is left of his mind – turns to explaining those facts away, rather than letting them change his much-cherished views.

As the old Russian saying has it, “live an eon-long life, and do nothing but study – and you'll still die a fool!” Having read Mr. Friedman for a while now, I wonder whether this much-celebrated winner of “three Pulitzer Prizes and the author of seven books, including “From Beirut to Jerusalem,” which won the National Book Award” should be given yet another, much-deserved distinction – that of being the textbook example of this fine piece of wisdom of the Russian folk.