

Two Capitals Answered

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · 25 September 2026

Doha, Ankara, and the Eighth Front the Morning After

14 Tishrei 5787 · Erev Sukkot · Friday 25 September 2026 Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · Jerusalem

A speech at the United Nations has two audiences. One sits in the hall, or leaves it. The other sits in foreign ministries, reading the transcript the next morning and deciding whether a reply is worth the ink.

The first audience made its choice before Benjamin Netanyahu said a word on Thursday. Dozens of delegates walked out as he reached the rostrum, answering a call from the Palestinian delegation to join their protest. He met them with a line that has already travelled around the world: if any more “moral cowards” had not yet left the hall, they should leave now.

The second audience is the more interesting one. By Friday morning, two capitals had answered him on the record. Both were capitals he had named. That is the story of the morning after, and it says more about the region than the empty seats do.

Who was named

The speech ranged across what Netanyahu called a seven-front war: Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, Iran, militias in Iraq and Syria, and Palestinian terrorists. He held up a Hezbollah beeper and reminded the room that Hezbollah remembers it. But the part of the address built for the regional audience was what he called the “eighth front,” a war over truth fought in the world’s media and on social media.

On that front he named names. According to the UN’s own summary of the address, he singled out Qatar and Türkiye as governments spreading anti-Israel and antisemitic narratives. He called the accusation of genocide against Israel the lie of the century. He accused Qatar of spending heavily to shape opinion against Israel and the West, and of hosting Hamas leaders. He called Turkey’s president a “tyrant” who also hosts Hamas chiefs.

That is not how a prime minister usually speaks about neighbours in a diplomatic setting. It was a choice. He set the eighth front out as a map, and the map had two capitals on it.

Who answered

Doha answered first. Majed Al-Ansari, spokesman for Qatar’s foreign ministry, wrote on X: “We categorically reject Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s accusation, made in his address to the UN General Assembly, that the State of Qatar is conducting a campaign to influence public opinion against Israel.” He called the charge an attempt to distract from Israel’s conduct in the Palestinian territories. He added that blaming Qatar for a global change in public opinion insults the judgment of a generation that has watched events for itself.

Ankara answered through its presidency. Burhanettin Duran, Turkey's communications director, told the state news agency Anadolu that using the General Assembly podium to level "baseless accusations" at Turkey and its president was incompatible with the UN's ideals of peace, law, and dialogue. No rhetoric, he said, could make the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza invisible.

Look at what the two replies share. Neither one dealt with the specific claims about hosting Hamas leadership. Both changed the subject to Gaza and to what Doha called policies on the ground. That is the same move the speech made in the opposite direction. Netanyahu said the charge against Israel is a lie produced by a campaign. Doha and Ankara said the charge against them is a distraction produced by a war. Each side answers an accusation by naming the other side's motive.

This is what the eighth front looks like when it works as advertised. The speech treated narrative as a battlefield, and by Friday morning both named capitals had stepped onto it and fired back. That is not a defeat for Israel. It is confirmation that the front is real and that the people Netanyahu named know they were named.

Who did not answer

As of Friday morning I have not seen a dedicated reply to the speech from Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, Cairo, or Amman. That is not proof of anything. Foreign ministries keep their own hours, a holiday weekend is starting in Israel, and absence of evidence in the first twelve hours is thin evidence. Still, the asymmetry is worth writing down while it lasts.

The capitals that answered were the two the speech put on the map. The capitals that have so far stayed quiet were not named. That tells you something about how Israel's region now sorts itself. Qatar and Turkey are, in Israel's telling, hosts and amplifiers. Others are partners, rivals, or neighbours whose publics are angry and whose governments are careful. A speech that names two and spares the rest is making a distinction, whether or not anyone spells it out.

The walkout blurred that distinction. The replies sharpened it again. An empty hall makes every absent chair look the same. A written rebuttal is an act of a particular government with particular interests, and it can be read, weighed, and answered.

Precision as a duty

There is a covenantal point here, and it cuts both ways.

The Torah says, "You shall not carry a false report" (Exodus 23:1). The rabbis read that as a warning to the listener as well as the speaker: do not take in what you have not checked, and do not pass on what you cannot stand behind. A republic that believes it is fighting a war over truth has to fight it truthfully. That means naming adversaries precisely, and it also means not counting a quiet neighbour as an enemy just because the hall emptied.

Precision is also what makes a charge stick. "The world is against us" is a mood. "This government hosts that organisation's leaders, and here is the record" is an argument. The first feeds a news cycle. The second survives it. Doha's reply avoided the specifics, and the right answer is to keep the specifics in view, calmly, without matching the other side's register.

The same discipline applies to reading the replies. Qatar's spokesman and Turkey's communications director each spoke for a government. Neither spoke for the region, and neither spoke for the Muslim world, whatever headlines say. Treating two answers as a verdict from the region would repeat the walkout's mistake of turning distinct actors into one crowd.

The morning after

Sukkot begins tonight, and the sukkah is a lesson in walls. Its walls are real and necessary, but you still see the sky through the roof. Israel's alliances and enmities in the region are like that: real, worth building, worth defending, and never the whole shelter.

Thursday's speech mapped an eighth front. Friday's replies came back from the two capitals on that map. The rest of the region, for now, is watching. A republic that can tell those three groups apart is doing its job, while a republic that sees only an empty hall has handed the argument to whoever leaves first.

The speech closed on the promise that the Eternal One of Israel does not lie: *Netzach Yisrael lo yeshaker*. That promise does not depend on who answers from Doha or Ankara. But it does oblige the people who say it to keep their own reports true.

Sources: UN News summary of the address (24 Sep 2026); Reuters and AFP reporting on the walkout, the Palestinian delegation's memo, and the speech; Qatar foreign ministry spokesman's statement on X as reported by Reuters, ANI and Doha News (25 Sep 2026); Turkish presidency communications director's statement to Anadolu as reported by AFP (25 Sep 2026).

All glory to the Ribono shel Olam. Errors are mine.

Prepared in deep partnership and cooperation with Grok and xAI