

DAVID BEN-GURION born 1886

DAVID BEN-GURION was born as David Green in Plonsk, Poland, in 1886. He became active in Zionism very early in his life; as a youngster of seventeen, in 1903, he was already one of the cofounders of an early Labor-Zionist group, the Poale Zion of Poland, and two years later he was part of the Jewish self-defense that was organized there and in Russia in the wake of the Kishinev pogrom of 1903 and under the threat of the convulsions which attended the unsuccessful Russian revolution of 1905. Ben-Gurion left for Palestine in the next year, to work as a farm hand, along with others we have already mentioned (e.g., Gordon and Brenner) who were laying the foundations of a Jewish labor movement in the state they hoped they were creating.

Though Ben-Gurion began in Palestine by doing simple physical labor, he soon achieved some organizational and political prominence. He was chairman of the conference which organized its Poale Zion party in 1907 and wrote considerably in the press of this small (not more than hundreds at the time) but very important group. By 1913 he was a delegate of his party to the Eleventh World Zionist Congress, and he has played an ever more prominent role since then at the successive meetings of that body. Ben-Gurion was among the many new Zionist settlers in Palestine who were exiled by the Turkish command in 1915, and he made his way to the United States. During the three years of his stay in New York he was actively involved in organizing the American wing of Labor-Zionism and, in particular, in its effort toward encouraging American Jews to settle in Palestine. Though much of his Zionist career was to be spent in a no-quarter battle with Jabotinsky, Ben-Gurion was attracted to the idea of a Jewish Legion which Jabotinsky was bringing into being (see his biography above, Part 10), and was among the organizers of its "American" branch, i.e., of the group of Russian Jews then resident in the United States who went to join the three battalions of fusiliers which wound

up in Palestine in 1918 under Allenby's command. Ben-Gurion was himself one of these soldiers.

After the war, at a conference in Haifa in 1920, he was among the founders of the Histadrut, the congress of labor unions in Palestine, and from 1921 to 1935 he served as its general secretary. In this role and in the post of chairman of the executive of the Jewish Agency that he held for the next thirteen years, until the state of Israel arose, Ben-Gurion was at the very head of the affairs of the Yishuv and of the Zionist movement. He represented Palestinian labor at several international socialist gatherings in the 1920's and 1930's and spoke for it before the various commissions of inquiry into Palestine which succeeded one another in that period. Concurrently, Ben-Gurion was, as he continues to be, a prolific journalist and speaker, whose papers and addresses have been published in many volumes.

His recent career is, of course, a dramatic element in modern history. Ben-Gurion was the leader of Palestinian Jewry in the struggles of the 1940's which preceded the state and, along with Silver, he provided the impetus toward Zionist political activism in the world arena.

Once the state was declared, he led it as its prime minister and minister of defence through its early, dangerous days. As writer and party leader, Ben-Gurion once coined a slogan for Labor-Zionism: "From class to becoming the nation as a whole." Whatever may happen to that dream for his specific group, it is undoubted that Ben-Gurion is today more than merely the political leader of Israel; he is more than its prime minister by virtue of a vote in parliament.

The passage below represents most of a speech he gave in Haifa in 1944 to a gathering of youth leaders. Many of the things he has labored for since that day are foreshadowed in this sketch of his ultimate vision.

THE IMPERATIVES OF THE JEWISH REVOLUTION (1944)

I MUST TELL YOU at the very beginning that not only you youth leaders who are assembled here today, but every boy and girl in the land of Israel has been called to the most difficult task in our history—perhaps in the history of man! The charge that has been laid

upon your generation is—unconditional allegiance, for life and death.

The Jewish revolution is not the first or only one in the history of the world, but it is perhaps the most difficult. There have been a number of great revolutions—it suffices to mention the English revolution in the seventeenth century, the American and French revolutions in the eighteenth century, and the Russian revolution in our own time—and there will be others, but the Jewish revolution is fundamentally of a different order and its task is, therefore, all the harder. All other revolts, both past and future, were uprisings against a *system*, against a political, social, or economic structure. Our revolution is directed not only against a system but against *destiny*, against the unique destiny of a unique people.

No parallel exists in the history of any nation to the unique fate of the Jews, to our career which has been *sui generis* not merely since the beginning of the exile but even before, when we lived in our own land. Ours was a tiny nation inhabiting a small country, and there have been many tiny nations and many small countries, but ours was a tiny nation possessed of a great spirit, an inspired people that believed in its pioneering mission to all men, in the mission that had been preached by the prophets of Israel. This people gave the world great and eternal moral truths and commandments. This people rose to prophetic visions of the unity of the Creator with His creation, of the dignity and infinite worth of the individual (because every man is created in the divine image), of social justice, universal peace, and love—"And thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."¹ This people was the first to prophesy about "the end of days,"² the first to see the vision of a new human society.

This small land, too, is unique. Its geology, topography, and geographical position have given it a special significance in human history. From the very beginning of its career our tiny nation, in its small country, has been surrounded by two great empires, by Egypt and Assyria (or Babylon). These lands were not only immensely powerful; they were also the bearers of high cultures which made fundamental contributions to the founding of civilization, for they were the inventors of mathematics, geometry, and astronomy, as well as intensive agriculture. Both empires centered in fertile valleys irrigated by great rivers, Egypt, by the Nile, and Babylon, by the Euphrates and the Tigris. These territories were the homelands of mighty states—and also of a significant and valuable literature in history, poetry, and science, whose fragmentary remains we still admire. You have no doubt read some of these writings in Tchernichowsky's³ brilliant translation of

the "Gilgamesh Epic," but this is only a small sample of the rich literary legacy left by Assyria and Babylon, as well as by Egypt.

Our small and land-poor Jewish people, therefore, lived in constant tension between the power and influence of the neighboring great empires and its own seemingly insignificant culture—a culture poor in material wealth and tangible monuments but rich and great in its human and moral concepts and in its vision of a universal "end of days." Even today, after two and a half millennia and all the progress and revolutions that have intervened, mankind has not yet begun to approach the realization of this vision.

This Jewish people preserved its values and its prophetic hopes, and these, in turn, preserved it. These intangibles were the source of the morale which enabled us to withstand the pressure of the mighty empires on our borders and to safeguard our distinctive character. The very uniqueness of the Jewish people became the power by which it has left its mark on the history of man and by which it continues even now to be a creative force in the world. The preservation of our political, national, cultural, and moral independence has required heroic efforts, and, during our prolonged struggle to maintain our identity and our values, we have suffered grievous losses.

Many Jews did capitulate. After two thousand years of exile our numbers would not be so small were it not for two factors: extermination and conversion. These have plagued us since the beginning of the Galut. Many Jews could not bear the ever-present contempt, persecutions, and expulsions; they could not withstand the fear that was forever threatening. There were many others who lacked the stamina to resist the allure of the dominant political system, civilization, and religion, with their seeming universalism and their promise of peace and good fortune for everyone except the Jews. Yes, individuals may have surrendered and left our ranks—but the nation as a whole neither surrendered nor lost heart!

In all the history of the world there is no more fantastic phenomenon than this centuries-long resistance of ours. Heroism is a universal quality, and examples of it are to be found in the annals of every nation, both ancient and modern. In our own time millions displayed tremendous heroism in the Second World War, but there is nothing in the history of mankind to compare to the power of resistance and the unshakable tenacity of our people over the course of centuries and millennia. The fate of being uprooted and exiled from the homeland has been suffered by other nations, as well as the Jews, but all the others, without exception, have disappeared from the stage of history

after a few decades. The Jews are the only example of a small, exiled, and forever hated people that stood fast and never surrendered from the time of their revolt against persecution by Hadrian to the recent uprisings in the ghettos of Warsaw, Lublin, and Bialystok. Resistance by a small people for so many centuries to so many powerful enemies—to refuse to surrender to historic destiny—this, in short, is the essential significance of Jewish history of the Galut.

What, therefore, is the meaning of our contemporary Jewish revolution—this revolt against destiny which the vanguard of the Jewish national renaissance has been cultivating in this small country for the last three generations? Our entire history in the Galut has represented a resistance of fate—what, therefore, is new in the content of our contemporary revolution? There is one fundamental difference: In the Galut the Jewish people knew the courage of *non-surrender*, even in the face of the noose and the *auto-da-fé*, even, as in our day, in the face of being buried alive by the tens of thousands. But the makers of the contemporary Jewish revolution have asserted: Resisting fate is not enough. *We must master our fate; we must take our destiny into our own hands!* This is the doctrine of the Jewish revolution—not non-surrender to the Galut but making an end of it.

Galut means dependence—material, political, spiritual, cultural, and intellectual dependence—because we are aliens, a minority, bereft of a homeland, rootless and separated from the soil, from labor, and from basic industry. Our task is to break radically with this dependence and to become masters of our own fate—in a word, to achieve independence. To have survived in the Galut despite all odds is not enough; we must create, by our own effort, the necessary conditions for our future survival as a free and independent people.

The meaning of the Jewish revolution is contained in one word—*independence!* Independence for the Jewish people in its homeland! Dependence is not merely political or economic; it is also moral, cultural, and intellectual, and it affects every limb and nerve of the body, every conscious and subconscious act. Independence, too, means more than political and economic freedom; it involves also the spiritual, moral, and intellectual realms, and, in essence, it is *independence in the heart*, in sentiment, and in will. From this inner sense of freedom outer forms of independence will develop in our way of life, social organization, relations with other people, and economic structure. Our independence will be shaped further by the conquest of labor and the land, by broadening the range of our language and its culture, by perfecting the methods of self-government and self-defense, by creat-

ing the framework and conditions for national independence and creativity, and finally—by attaining political independence. This is the essence of the Jewish revolution.

What makes this revolution so different is that it bears no relation to an existing order. The tragedy of the Jews is that we are not part of any order. A revolution directed against a well-defined social structure is a one-time affair; it can succeed by seizing control of the government and wielding the newly seized power to change the existing social and economic order. The Jewish revolution against our historic destiny must be a prolonged and continuing struggle, an enlistment of our own generation and even of those to come, and its road to success is not through seizure of power but only by the gradual shaping of the forces, mentioned above, that lead to independence, by girding ourselves with unyielding tenacity for changing our national destiny. There are only two means to this end: the ingathering of the exiles and independence in the homeland.

The Jewish revolution did not come into being and is not operating in a vacuum. Both Palestine and the Jews of the world are part of a complex pattern of international relations which are beyond our control, but which continue to affect and influence our lives, despite all our efforts to master our fate and become independent. The involved pattern of the international scene bristles with dangers, both internal and external, which threaten the Jewish revolution. Some of these forces have direct bearing on the tasks that confront the younger generation, and I shall therefore discuss them.

The Jewish revolution is taking place in a revolutionary era. This is a source of danger, and the pitfalls, though perhaps not evident on the surface, are real and deep.

Does the success of our revolution depend on ourselves, on our own meager resources, or on the great general forces now revolutionizing the world? Whatever danger threatens us is not from the open and avowed enemies of the aims and purposes of the Jewish revolution, even though such relatively unimportant adversaries must nonetheless be reckoned with.

There is some danger from the Jewish agents of foreign powers, the middlemen for alien nations and cultures, who were called in ancient times "traitors to the Covenant" and are known in our day as the "Yevsektzia" (and, in our country, as the "Fraction"),⁴ but their well-known dependence on foreign influences weakens their effectiveness. The very fact that they serve unashamedly as foreign agents curbs

their influence within our people. *The fate of the Jewish revolution will be determined by its own inner forces.*

There is, however, a danger that threatens the protagonists of the Jewish revolution themselves—that their capacity for *independent judgment* of the forces which will determine our future may weaken, that they may lose confidence in our own ability to be the focal and decisive factors in the shaping of the tomorrow of at least our own small world. We face the danger of self-deprecation, because we are small and weak in comparison to the great powers of the world—the danger of losing respect for our own achievements and victories in comparison with the great deeds of those nations which rule over continents and oceans. This may tempt some of us to pin our hopes on "the wave of the future"—not on our own potentialities but on forces outside ourselves. In a word, there is the danger of our orienting ourselves on "the wave of the future" of others.

The issue of "orientation" is not a new one. Open the Bible and you will find such a discussion between Jeremiah (in Chapters 42–43) and the Captains Johanan, son of Kareah, and Jezaniah, son of Hoshaiyah, (and, very likely, even this was not the first debate about "orientation" in Jewish history). They asked the prophet to "tell us the way wherein we should walk and the thing we should do." Jeremiah answered: "If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up . . . Be not afraid of the king of Babylon." And to those who said, "No, but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war . . . nor have hunger of bread, and there will we abide," the prophet replied: "If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt and go to sojourn there; then it shall come to pass that the sword, which ye fear, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye are afraid, shall follow hard after you there in Egypt, and there ye shall die. . . . And ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more." This was the first expression, original and bold, of the principle of Jewish self-reliance.

This debate still continues. The issue is not whether we should look to the forces of yesterday or those of tomorrow. In history both past and future are relative terms. What was regarded yesterday as the wave of the future may today seem reactionary, and what seemed of no importance yesterday may be a great force tomorrow.

The real issue, now as in the past, is whether we should rely on the power of others or on our own strength. Both sides are finding par-

tisans even among the protagonists of the Jewish revolution; because we are a small, weak, and numerically insignificant people, the great powers and movements are enchanting and blinding us and undermining our self-confidence.

We have always been a small power and we shall never be large in numbers. Even in Isaiah's time the Jews were a weak power surrounded by great nations which were superior to us in numbers and strength, in culture and science. An intellectual living in the days of the prophets, at home in the culture of the mighty, rich nations surrounding us—and most of the prophets were such intellectuals—had to have great faith in the mission and uniqueness of Israel in order to retain his Jewishness. Our neighbors did not know Hebrew but spoke the Egyptian and Babylonian languages. In spite of this Micah and Hosea wrote in Hebrew, a provincial tongue spoken only by a small people, yet their works are immortal, having been translated into hundreds of languages and enjoying a wider circulation than any other book in the world.

All those who relied on the mighty strength of Babylon and Egypt, of Greece and Rome, have been forgotten and every trace of them has disappeared. The works and prophecies of those who kept faith with Israel, poor and weak though she was, have endured down to our day and have left their imprint on all civilization. It is this "orientation" on a weak but independent power, the belief in its mission and its uniqueness, that has sustained the Jewish people and brought us to this point. Even in our times, if we have accomplished anything in our homeland—and we have accomplished something—our achievements were made possible by the faith we had in ourselves. The twenty youths who founded the first *kvutzah* more than thirty years ago on the banks of the Jordan did more for humanity and Jewish history, for the Jewish and international workers' movement, than all the Jewish socialists and revolutionaries who followed the chariots of the revolution among the great nations and mocked the "insignificant and peculiar" efforts of the pioneers in Israel. Yet the modest achievement of the pioneers of the Jewish revolution, grounded in their faith in themselves and their mission, has today become the sole anchor and beacon light for the Jewish survivors, the example for hundreds of thousands of Jewish young people everywhere. I am sure it will some day serve as a model for the workers' movement of the world.

However, as long as we are few and weak, we still face the danger of foreign influences. A poor man's wisdom has always been suspect. Unless we value our independence and see in our achievements the chief

aim of our own efforts—even though it is only one link in the chain of the world revolution, but this is the link in which our destiny and our future are involved—the Jewish revolution will not be realized.

The first imperative of the Jewish revolution is, therefore—to guard jealously the independence, the inner moral and intellectual freedom, of our movement. Yes, we must not ignore or undervalue what is happening in the world without, and we must understand the great forces and the revolutionary movements in all the nations that are shaping the destiny of the world. But we cannot forget for a moment that the Jewish revolution can succeed only through our devotion to our own unique needs and destiny, only by reliance on our own strength, only if we exert the most stubborn efforts to increase its power and to *make it a wave of the future*. We dare not ever stray from this policy of self-reliance, from the will to make of ourselves a wave of the future—the wave of the future of the Jewish people and of a land of Israel so regenerated that it will attract Jews unto itself and make other peoples take account of it in their political and social calculations. If we ever deviate from this basic principle, we shall have destroyed the Jewish revolution and our future as a people.

The real danger that threatens is, as I have said, not entirely from the avowed "traitors to the Covenant" but also from some of those prime movers of the Jewish revolution who do not have an uncompromising and single-minded devotion, who do not adhere without any moral, ideological, or political qualification, to the unique requirements and demands of the Jewish revolution.⁵

The second indispensable imperative of the Jewish revolution is *the unity of its protagonists*. This sharing together in a fate, a creative process, and a struggle is what unites this vanguard—the pioneers, the builders of the homeland, the workers of the land of Israel, who are inspired by the vision of a Jewish renaissance on humanistic, Zionist, and socialist foundations. The conquest of labor and the land, self-defense, the development of the Hebrew language and culture, freedom for the individual and the nation, co-operation and social responsibility, preparation for further immigration, and the welding of the arrivals from the various Diasporas into a nation—these fundamental purposes are held in common, both in theory and in practice, by all those who are faithful to our revolution. These values make it possible, and indeed mandatory, that they be united. The Jewish revolution is incomparably difficult, and, unless there is unity and co-operation, it will fail. Without such inner unity we cannot hope for full realization of our creative potential; only such unity can give us the strength to

withstand obstacles and reverses and make it possible for both the individual and the community to rise to their tasks.

Unity is the imperative of our mission and our destiny. Nonetheless, of all the values of our movement it is the one that is perhaps most honored in theory and least respected in practice. We may now be attempting to become rooted in the homeland and laboring to create an independent life, but the habits of disunity and anarchy which grew wild among us in the course of hundreds of years of exile and subservience cannot easily be corrected. Rifts are appearing not only in the Yishuv as a whole; after decades of displaying an unequaled capacity for unity even the *Halutzim* are being affected, first in Hehalutz,⁶ then in the Kibbutz movement, and finally in the party itself. Once this disruptive force is let loose, it will not spare the Histadrut, the World Zionist Organization, or any of the other over-all bodies of the Yishuv and the Jewish people. Those who are willing to disrupt the Hehalutz or the party will have no compunction about destroying the unity of the Kibbutz movement and the Histadrut.⁷

Hehalutz is the creative laboratory of the Jewish revolution, of the conquest of labor, of the national renaissance. You cannot fragmentize and divide the Hehalutz without fragmentizing and dividing our movement as a whole. If there is no possibility and no need for a united Hehalutz of all labor in the land of Israel, a united Histadrut is also impossible and unnecessary. Those who cannot work together in Hehalutz will be no more capable of co-operating in the Histadrut. If Tirat Zvi and Ein Harod cannot accept one another as valid expressions of the pioneering spirit, can we be sure about Degania and Kinneret, or even about Yagur and Mishmar Ha-Emek? If every form of settlement on the land and every ideological faction requires a Hehalutz of its own, then their union in the general Histadrut is a fiction and a fraud. A separate Hehalutz for every kibbutz and faction in the Diaspora is the prelude to a separate Histadrut for every variety of agricultural settlement and ideological faction in the homeland. Those who regard such a policy as correct in the Diaspora cannot escape its consequences in the land of Israel.

The separatist tendency that has manifested itself in our land uses the empty phrase "of proletarian origin" as its slogan. This doctrine is totally foreign to the spirit and essence of the Jewish revolution. Not the *origin* but the *mission*, not "whence" but "whither," is what will decide the fate of our revolution. The Jewish people is not a proletarian people and there are no sons of the proletariat to assure the success of its revolution. The mission of the Jewish revolution is to transform

the Jewish people into a *laboring* people, and our revolution, therefore, makes its demand not only of you of the youth leadership assembled here today but of every young person who belongs to our people. *Not our origin and our past but our mission and our future are what determines our path.* The dividing line between our past and our future is in Hehalutz, in the transition to a productive way of life. This is the workshop in which our revolutionary unity is forged, and the influence of that unity is then felt throughout our work—in the efforts for immigration and the conquest of labor, for resettling the land and adding to our labor force in the harbors and factories, and for spreading the knowledge of Hebrew; in the struggle for decent working conditions, national rights, and security; in the building of a new economy and a new society; and, ultimately, in attaining freedom, equality, dignity, and independence. Only together, in one Hehalutz and in one Socialist-Zionist party, in a united Jewish community and an undivided World Zionist Organization, can we assure Jewish immigration, (by whatever means), redeem and rebuild the land, and fight our way through to victory.

The Jewish revolution requires not only an undivided and organic partnership of all the workers in Israel but also the mutual co-operation of labor and the nation. Whatever we have accomplished to date—the creation of the beginnings of strength for our people and for the labor movement, of a beginning toward the conquest of labor and a return to the soil and the sea—has been hard and costly. We have succeeded in these tasks only because the revolutionary pioneers in Israel and the Jewish people as a whole have gone forward loyally arm in arm. This co-operation is based on a two-way historical tie, the bond of the Jewish people to its pioneer-workers and the bond of the worker-pioneer to the people. Whoever harms the cause of the working class, in the supposed name of the general interests of the people, is false to the historical will of the people and to its needs. And anyone who questions the ultimate authority of the nation as a whole, in the supposed name of the class-independence of labor, negates the historic mission of Jewish labor and undermines its dynamic potential. The historic strength of the Jewish worker is not rooted in his present setting and achievements—this is only the first layer—but in the hidden storehouses of our scattered nation and in its untapped abilities. Only when a way can be found to harness the latent resources of our people will we really gain the necessary strength to carry out our revolutionary tasks.

Another kind of co-operation is required from those who are loyal

to our revolution: the comradeship of Jewish labor with international labor. This co-operation must be based on mutual aid and the equality of free men. We will not achieve the aims of our revolution by slavery and dependence, by estrangement and individualism, or by isolating ourselves. The difficult task we are performing on the Jewish scene is part of a tremendous movement which involves all of humanity—the world revolution, whose aims are the redemption of man from every form of enslavement, discrimination, and exploitation, no matter whether the victims are nations, races, religions, or one of the sexes. Our revolution differs from all others because our destiny is different, but the difference serves to unite us with others and not to estrange us. Though our task is unique, our revolution does have points of contact with others, and we must learn to see both the differences and the similarities. While guarding our moral and intellectual individuality, we must cultivate our international partnership with the makers of the world revolution, with the workers of all nations, but this must be an equal partnership—not equal in strength, but in rights and in dignity. We are few, our achievements are picayune, our nation is weak, and our land is small. Among the other peoples there are great, mighty, and awesome nations, ruling vast parts of the world. Nevertheless we are equal to them in rights and dignity, because we, too, have a share in the world revolution, and this share—and we will have no part of any other kind of association—is valueless without equal rights and dignity. Let us not underestimate the value of quantity—in numbers there is strength—but this is not the whole story. Little Judah certainly contributed no less to the world than mighty Egypt, Babylon, and Rome. Nor has the source of our creativity evaporated. Who knows, perhaps a regenerated Judah is still destined for great and significant accomplishment in the world of tomorrow. What Israel gave the world when it lived in its own land was achieved not by those Jews who served Egypt, Babylon, and Rome, but by those who remained faithful to our own identity. If we are destined to make a contribution once more to the totality of human civilization, that will be done only by those who keep faith with the Jewish revolution and the Jewish spirit. One Degania is worth more than all the "Yevsektzias" and assimilationists in the world.

The third—and perhaps the most important—imperative of the Jewish revolution is: *Halutziut*.⁸

We are nearing the end of the war. City after city and country after country are being liberated—but we Jews are not sharing in this joy, for almost the entire Jewish population of the newly liberated lands

has been wiped out. The wellspring from which the Jewish revolution drew its strength has been destroyed. The Jewish masses on which our effort depended—they are obliterated. The Jewries of Poland, Lithuania, and Galicia—these no longer exist.

Now, more than ever before, we need a strong and devoted pioneering force. The desert area of our land is calling us, and the destruction of our people is crying out to us. In order to save the remnant—and all of us now constitute a remnant, including our own communities here in the land of Israel—our work must proceed at forced draft. The tasks that lie ahead will require pioneering efforts the likes of which we have never known, for we must conquer and fructify the waste places (in the mountains of Galilee, the plains of the Negev, the valley of the Jordan, the sand dunes of the seashore, and the mountains of Judea) and we must prepare the way for new immigrants from Yemen, Persia, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Romania, Greece, France, and Belgium—in short, from every country in which some remnant is still alive. We must look toward immigration from England, America, and North and South Africa, too, and we are not giving up the hope that even the Jews of Soviet Russia will eventually join this stream. First of all, we must conquer the sea and the desert, for these will provide us with room for new settlers and will serve as a laboratory for the development of new forms of economic and agricultural endeavor. We need men of the sea—sailors, fishermen, dock workers, and shipbuilders of our own—who will make the sea a source of economic and political strength; we need men of the desert who will know it in all its secrets and will lead us in transforming the wasteland into a blessing, a place in which to work and live. Unless we conquer both the sea and the desert—by creating Jewish sailors and even Jewish Bedouin tribes—we cannot succeed in the tasks of immigration and resettlement that we must shoulder after the war. Yes, we have made a small beginning in the sea, but we have as yet done nothing in the desert, even though it must be remembered that the bulk of our country is desert. Our desert is not a Sahara or a hopelessly arid wilderness. The deserts of Israel were once inhabited in ancient times and, even today, they are not entirely unpopulated. A beginning toward reclamation should be made by Jewish desert-dwellers, Bedouins, who will know how to live and work in tents and will be able to support themselves like the Arab, but who along with possessing primitive Bedouin skills, will also be familiar with modern cultural, scientific, and technical knowledge. This combination will enable them to find a way of making the wilderness bloom and turning the desert into a place of settled habitation.

The conquest of the desert requires bold and adventurous pioneers who will not shrink back in the face of any obstacle or hardship.

The absorption of immigration will be a more difficult task than ever before and will require of us new and unprecedented efforts. The new immigrants will be coming to us from misery and poverty and will need prolonged care and intensive help from the pioneer vanguard. Where can we get such pioneering leadership, now that the great reserves in Poland, Lithuania, Galicia, and Czechoslovakia have been done to death? *The youth of the homeland must now assume these pioneering tasks.*

It is impossible to fill the terrible void left by the destruction of European Jewry. This dreadful loss is irreplaceable—and a greater obligation is therefore placed on Israeli youth.

In my opinion no greater or more urgent task awaits our youth leadership than the work of ingathering and resettlement. But even a decision for personal commitment is not enough; you must be the nucleus for enlisting Jewish youth throughout the country, in the cities and on the farms, whatever their background. It is not enough for the children to continue the work of their fathers in Degania, Nahalal, Ein Harod, Kfar Yehezkel, Tel Yosef, and Ein Ganim. They are now called elsewhere to new works of daring, for the wastelands of both the land and the sea are beckoning.

The youth leadership must, in the first place, activate the young people now at school or in the labor force, and even those who neither work nor study, for in this all too large element, too, there are important untapped possibilities for pioneering. Destiny has chosen this generation of our young people for difficult and desperate tasks. There is a pioneering potential in every one of these young men and women, and our youth leadership can assume no greater mission than *to make pioneers of the youth of our country!* This is the greatest and most urgent need of the Jewish revolution.

Since I called, at the beginning of my remarks, for absolute allegiance to the Jewish revolution, I shall now make a few concluding remarks about the goal of our revolution: *It is the complete ingathering of the exiles into a socialist Jewish state.*

Even this is not our ultimate goal, for there is no ultimate goal in history. The ingathering of the exiles into a socialist Jewish state is in fact only a precondition for the fulfillment of the real mission of our people. We must first break the constricting chains of national and class oppression and become free men, enjoying complete individual and national independence on the soil of a redeemed homeland. After

that we can address ourselves to the great mission of man on this earth—to master the forces of nature and to develop his unique creative genius to the highest degree.

I do not know how many of us will live to see that great day, but I believe that not only you of the youth leadership but all of us of the second and third Aliyot assembled here, and all our comrades from far and near, can have high hope of seeing the Jewish revolution realized in our day. This consummation does not depend only on ourselves. Outside forces beyond our control and unforeseen circumstances which we cannot now even imagine will play their parts in tipping the scales one way or another. Nonetheless, despite all that, *it does depend on us:* on the Jewish people, the Yishuv in the homeland, the labor movement, and the pioneer youth. Let us all remain faithful without any reservation, faithful in thought and deed, in emotion and will, to the demands and the mission of the Jewish revolution; let us preserve our inner dignity and unity and our continuing solidarity with both the Jewish people as a whole and the international labor movement; and let us transform the beaten and downtrodden into the pioneers of a work of immigration and resettlement equal to the grave crisis and the redemptive vision of our people. If such be our program, there is hope that many of us will live to see the consummation of the Jewish revolution—the concentration of the majority of our people in a homeland transformed into a socialist Jewish state.



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Declaration of Establishment of State of Israel

14 May 1948

THE DECLARATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

May 14, 1948

On May 14, 1948, on the day in which the British Mandate over a Palestine expired, the Jewish People's Council gathered at the Tel Aviv Museum, and approved the following proclamation, declaring the establishment of the State of Israel. The new state was recognized that night by the United States and three days later by the USSR.



Text:

ERETZ-ISRAEL [(Hebrew) - the Land of Israel, Palestine] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

After being forcibly exiled from their land, the people kept faith with it throughout their Dispersion and never ceased to pray and hope for their return to it and for the restoration in it of their political freedom.

Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland. In recent decades they returned in their masses. Pioneers, *ma'pilim* [(Hebrew) - immigrants coming to Eretz-Israel in defiance of restrictive legislation] and defenders, they made deserts bloom, revived the Hebrew language, built villages and towns, and created a thriving community controlling its own economy and culture, loving peace but knowing how to defend itself, bringing the blessings of progress to all the country's inhabitants, and aspiring towards independent nationhood.



In the year 5657 (1897), at the summons of the spiritual father of the Jewish State, Theodore Herzl, the First Zionist Congress convened and proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to national rebirth in its own country.

This right was recognized in the *Balfour Declaration* of the 2nd November, 1917, and re-affirmed in the *Mandate of the League of Nations* which, in particular, gave international sanction to the historic connection between the Jewish people and Eretz-Israel and to the right of the Jewish people to rebuild its National Home.

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people - the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe - was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the comity of nations.

Survivors of the Nazi holocaust in Europe, as well as Jews from other parts of the world, continued to migrate to Eretz-Israel, undaunted by difficulties, restrictions and dangers, and never ceased to assert their right to a life of dignity, freedom

Declaration of Establishment of State of Israel

and honest toil in their national homeland.

In the Second World War, the Jewish community of this country contributed its full share to the struggle of the freedom-and peace-loving nations against the forces of Nazi wickedness and, by the blood of its soldiers and its war effort, gained the right to be reckoned among the peoples who founded the United Nations.

On the 29th November, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz-Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their State is irrevocable.

This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State.

ACCORDINGLY WE, MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF ERETZ-ISRAEL AND OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT, ARE HERE ASSEMBLED ON THE DAY OF THE TERMINATION OF THE BRITISH MANDATE OVER ERETZ-ISRAEL AND, BY VIRTUE OF OUR NATURAL AND HISTORIC RIGHT AND ON THE STRENGTH OF THE RESOLUTION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HEREBY DECLARE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH STATE IN ERETZ-ISRAEL, TO BE KNOWN AS THE STATE OF ISRAEL.

WE DECLARE that, with effect from the moment of the termination of the Mandate being tonight, the eve of Sabbath, the 6th Iyar, 5708 (15th May, 1948), until the establishment of the elected, regular authorities of the State in accordance with the Constitution which shall be adopted by the Elected Constituent Assembly not later than the 1st October 1948, the People's Council shall act as a Provisional Council of State, and its executive organ, the People's Administration, shall be the Provisional Government of the Jewish State, to be called "Israel".

THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

THE STATE OF ISRAEL is prepared to cooperate with the agencies and representatives of the United Nations in implementing the resolution of the General Assembly of the 29th November, 1947, and will take steps to bring about the economic union of the whole of Eretz-Israel.

WE APPEAL to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building-up of its State and to receive the State of Israel into the comity of nations.

WE APPEAL - in the very midst of the onslaught launched against us now for months - to the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to preserve peace and participate in the upbuilding of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions.

WE EXTEND our hand to all neighbouring states and their peoples in an offer of peace and good neighbourliness, and appeal to them to establish bonds of cooperation and mutual help with the sovereign Jewish people settled in its own land. The State of Israel is prepared to do its share in a common effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.

WE APPEAL to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel.

PLACING OUR TRUST IN THE "ROCK OF ISRAEL", WE AFFIX OUR SIGNATURES TO THIS PROCLAMATION AT THIS SESSION OF THE PROVISIONAL COUNCIL OF STATE, ON THE SOIL OF THE HOMELAND, IN THE CITY OF TEL-AVIV, ON THIS SABBATH EVE, THE 5TH DAY OF IYAR, 5708 (14TH MAY, 1948).

David Ben-Gurion

<i>Daniel Auster</i>	<i>Rachel Cohen</i>	<i>David Zvi Pinkas</i>
<i>Mordekhai Bentov</i>	<i>Rabbi Kalman Kahana</i>	<i>Aharon Zisling</i>
<i>Yitzchak Ben Zvi</i>	<i>Saadia Kobashi</i>	<i>Moshe Kolodny</i>
<i>Eliyahu Berligne</i>	<i>Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Levin</i>	<i>Eliezer Kaplan</i>
<i>Fritz Bernstein</i>	<i>Meir David Loewenstein</i>	<i>Abraham Katzenelson</i>
<i>Rabbi Wolf Gold</i>	<i>Zvi Luria</i>	<i>Felix Rosenblueth</i>
<i>Meir Grabovsky</i>	<i>Golda Myerson</i>	<i>David Remez</i>
<i>Yitzchak Gruenbaum</i>	<i>Nachum Nir</i>	<i>Berl Repetur</i>
<i>Dr. Abraham Granovsky</i>		<i>Mordekhai Shattner</i>

*Eliyahu Dobkin**Zvi Segal**Ben Zion Sternberg**Meir Wilner-Kovner**Rabbi Yehuda Leib Hacohen Fishman**Bekhor Shitreet**Zerach Wahrahaftig**Moshe Shapira**Herzl Vardi**Moshe Shertok*

* Published in the Official Gazette, No. 1 of the 5th, Iyar, 5708 (14th May, 1948).

See Also[The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel - facsimile](#)[Signatories of the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel](#)[Israel's Declaration of Independence: An Assessment after 60 Years of Statehood](#)[Print version](#)[Send To Friend](#)[Terms of use](#) | [Site Map](#) | [ContactUs](#)

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The Law of Return 5710 (1950)*

Right of aliyah**

1. Every Jew has the right to come to this country as an oleh**.

Oleh's visa

2. (a) Aliyah shall be by oleh's visa.

(b) An oleh's visa shall be granted to every Jew who has expressed his desire to settle in Israel, unless the Minister of Immigration is satisfied that the applicant

(1) is engaged in an activity directed against the Jewish people;
or

(2) is likely to endanger public health or the security of the State.

Oleh's certificate

3. (a) A Jew who has come to Israel and subsequent to his arrival has expressed his desire to settle in Israel may, while still in Israel, receive an oleh's certificate.

(b) The restrictions specified in section 2(b) shall apply also to the grant of an oleh's certificate, but a person shall not be regarded as endangering public health on account of an illness contracted after his arrival in Israel.

Residents and persons born in this country

4. Every Jew who has immigrated into this country before the coming into force of this Law, and every Jew who was born in this country, whether before or after the coming into force of this Law, shall be deemed to be a person who has come to this country as an oleh under this Law.

Implementation and regulations

5. The Minister of Immigration is charged with the implementation of this Law and may make regulations as to any matter relating to such implementation and also as to the grant of oleh's visas and oleh's certificates to minors up to the age of 18 years.

DAVID BEN-GURION
Prime Minister

MOSHE SHAPIRA
Minister of Immigration

YOSEF SPRINZAK
Acting President of the State
Chairman of the Knesset

* Passed by the Knesset on the 20th Tammuz, 5710 (5th July, 1950) and published in Sefer Ha-Chukkim No. 51 of the 21st Tammuz, 5710 (5th July, 1950), p. 159; the Bill and an Explanatory Note were published in Hatza'ot Chok No. 48 of the 12th Tammuz, 5710 (27th June, 1950), p. 189.

** Translator's Note: Aliyah means immigration of Jews, and oleh (plural: olim) means a Jew immigrating, into Israel.

Law of Return (Amendment 5714-1954)**Amendment of section 2(b)*

1. In section 2 (b) of the Law of Return, 5710-1950** -

Accessibility

(1) the full stop at the end of paragraph (2) shall be replaced by a semi-colon, and the word "or" shall be inserted thereafter ;

(2) the following paragraph shall be inserted after paragraph (2):

"(3) is a person with a criminal past, likely to endanger public welfare.".

Amendment of sections 2 and 5

2. In sections 2 and 5 of the Law, the words "the Minister of Immigration" shall be replaced by the words "the Minister of the Interior".

MOSHE SHARETT

Prime Minister

YOSEF SERLIN

Minister of Health

Acting Minister of the Interior

YITZCHAK BEN-ZVI

President of the State

* Passed by the Knesset on the 24th Av, 5714 (23rd August, 1954) and published in Sefer Ha-Chukkim No. 163 of the 3rd Elul, 5714 (1st September, 1954) p. 174; the Bill and an Explanatory Note were published in Hatza'ot Chok No. 192 of 5714, p. 88.

** Sefer Ha-Chukkim No. 51 of 5710, p. 159, LSI vol. IV, 114.

Law of Return (Amendment No. 2) 5730-1970**Addition of sections 4A and 4B*

1. In the Law of Return, 5710-1950**, the following sections shall be inserted after section 4:

"Rights of members of family

4A. (a) The rights of a Jew under this Law and the rights of an oleh under the Nationality Law, 5712-1952***, as well as the rights of an oleh under any other enactment, are also vested in a child and a grandchild of a Jew, the spouse of a Jew, the spouse of a child of a Jew and the spouse of a grandchild of a Jew, except for a person who has been a Jew and has voluntarily changed his religion.

(b) It shall be immaterial whether or not a Jew by whose right a right under subsection (a) is claimed is still alive and whether or not he has immigrated to Israel.

(c) The restrictions and conditions prescribed in respect of a Jew or an oleh by or under this Law or by the enactments referred to in subsection (a) shall also apply to a person who claims a right under subsection (a).

Definition

4B. For the purposes of this Law, "Jew" means a person who was born of a Jewish mother or has become converted to Judaism and who is not a member of another religion."

Amendment of section 5

2. In section 5 of the Law of Return, 5710-1950, the following shall be added

at the end: "Regulations for the purposes of sections 4A and 4B require the approval of the Constitution, Legislation and Juridical Com ...
Knesset.".

[Accessibility](#)

*Amendment of the
Population Registry Law,
5725-1965*

3. In the Population Registry Law, 5725-1965****, the following section shall be inserted after section 3:

"Power of registration and definition

3A. (a) A person shall not be registered as a Jew by ethnic affiliation or religion if a notification under this Law or another entry in the Registry or a public document indicates that he is not a Jew, so long as the said notification, entry or document has not been controverted to the satisfaction of the Chief Registration Officer or so long as declaratory judgment of a competent court or tribunal has not otherwise determined.

(b) For the purposes of this Law and of any registration or document thereunder, "Jew" has the same meaning as in section 4B of the Law of Return, 5710-1950.

(c) This section shall not derogate from a registration effected before its coming into force.".

GOLDA MEIR
Prime Minister
Acting Minister of the Interior

SHNEUR ZALMAN SHAZAR
President of the State

* Passed by the Knesset on 2nd Adar Bet, 5730 (10th March, 1970) and published in Sefer Ha-Chukkim No. 586 of the 11th Adar Bet, 5730 (19th March, 1970), p. 34; the Bill and an Explanatory Note were published in Hatza'ot Chok No. 866 of 5730, p. 36.

** Sefer Ha-Chukkim of 5710 p. 159 - LSI vol. IV, p. 114; Sefer Ha-Chukkim No. 5714, p. 174 - LSI vol. VIII, p. 144.

*** Sefer Ha-Chukkim of 5712, p. 146 ; LSI vol. VI, p. 50.

**** Sefer Ha-Chukkim of 5725, p. 270 ; LSI vol. XIX, p. 288.



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