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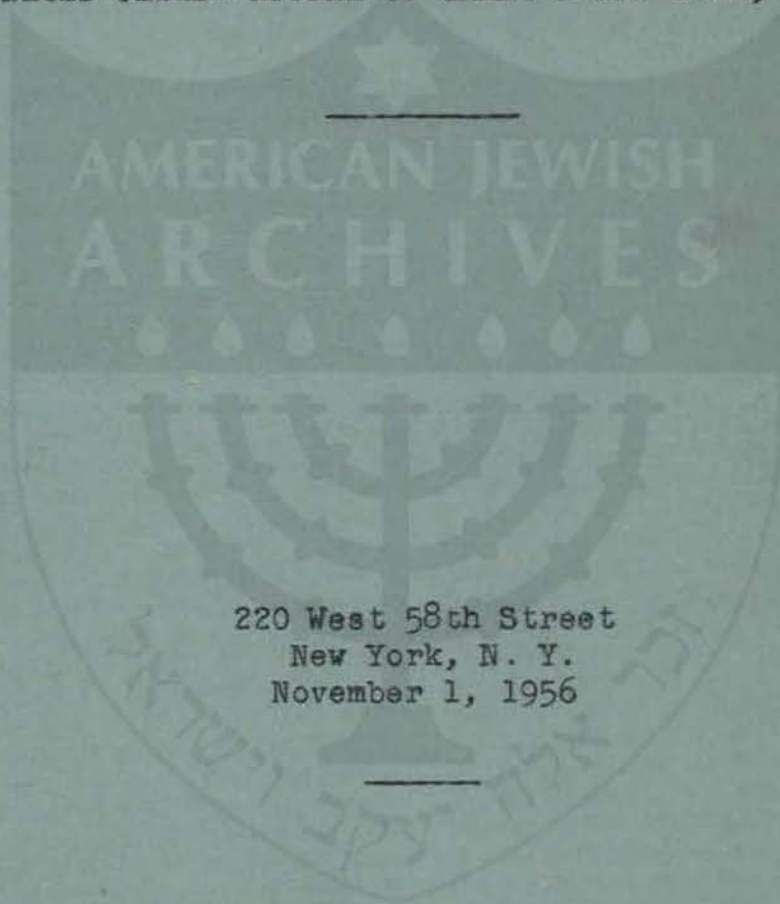
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ADDRESS BY RABBI HERBERT FRIEDMAN

at a staff meeting of the

UNITED JEWISH APPEAL OF GREATER NEW YORK, INC.



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Address by Rabbi Herbert Friedman at a staff meeting of the United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York, Inc., held at the headquarters of the UJA, 220 West 58 Street, New York, N. Y., on Thursday morning, November 1, 1956.

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RABBI FRIEDMAN: If I am a little bit incoherent in regard to the sequence of things about which I want to talk to you, it is because I got off an airplane about fifteen minutes ago; we have been circling over New York for four hours, trying to land, and all that time, of course, my mind was six thousand miles away.

I left Jerusalem Tuesday afternoon -- and this is Thursday morning. In the few hours in between, I have spent time in Paris with Mr. Tzur, the Israel Ambassador to France; Nahum Goldmann, who is there now; and Mr. Shragai, who is in charge of immigration.

A funny sidelight of the whole business is that in the middle of yesterday afternoon, when everybody's mind was just as tense as could be, an airplane landed in Geneva with nineteen Jews from China whom nobody expected. Nobody knew what to do with them. Finally, two people had to walk out of the JDC office and find room for nineteen Jews from

China. It was a somewhat incongruous note in the midst of all that was happening -- and yet it was a good note, because it showed that the life-giving and life-saving work was going on at the same time that we were talking about airplanes and bombs.

This description of the last forty-eight hours is therefore mad enough so that you can appreciate the fact that I may not have everything in a good orderly sequence. Secondly, I am not even sure of what you want to know, because, while I am thoroughly familiar with what has been going on in Israel and in Europe, I am quite unfamiliar with what has been going on here in the United States.

The reaction in the Quai d'Orsay yesterday afternoon was that Mr. Eisenhower is "mad as a bull": that's the way the French put it. (We will have to look over this record afterward and decide what we can use and what we cannot use.) The French don't know what public opinion is in America on this question -- and, curiously enough, they are quite eager to know what Jewish public opinion in America is. Don't think that it is not important to them.

I cannot fill you in, then, on all the questions that you may have in your minds, on the basis of what has been happening here. But let me tell you what has happened over

there -- and then, if we have time, I will try to answer any questions you may have.

What happened over there was that a mobilization order went out probably Thursday night or Friday morning. The official statement of mobilization of the reserves was made public Sunday morning in Israel, but mobilization had already been going on for probably forty-eight hours. Mobilization in Israel means that approximately 250,000 men who are in the reserves, and who are organized in a very quick and efficient system, receive call-up notices to report to the mefakad, the commander of their unit, at a certain time and at a certain place. Weapons are issued to them there and they wait at that place for additional orders.

If Israel were to call up a complete mobilization of all her reserves, it would involve, as I have indicated, about 250,000 people. She did not mobilize anywhere near that number. My guess is that it was probably a fifty or sixty percent mobilization.

By Friday morning you began to see the young men disappearing from the streets. By Friday afternoon you couldn't get a taxi. By Saturday night the buses were no longer running, because the bus drivers had been taken. If fifty or sixty percent of the young men were called to service,

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that meant that many functions had to cease.

I traveled over the country all day -- Friday, Saturday and Sunday -- from north to south, to see for myself what was happening. The roads were full of tanks, trucks, armored cars and large mobile artillery which was being hauled by carriers that had fifty men in each truck and the cannon behind it. It was quite clear that a mobilization of manpower and a mobilization of equipment was taking place.

I want you to know -- because I am sure you will be asked -- the reasons why Israel started to mobilize. That question will be asked not even from motives of antagonism or resentment; friends will ask that question, and you have to know the answer to it.

I think that there is no better answer than the official statement that was given when the announcement was finally made to the world on Sunday morning. The statement came from the Ministry of Defense and from the Foreign Ministry: that this mobilization had occurred "as a precautionary measure and to safeguard the security of Israel's borders and border settlements".

Reasons were then given as to why Israel felt that she had to take these precautions in order to protect her border settlements. The reasons were pretty much as follows:

First, there was the renewed activity of the fedaysen, the Arab guerrilla infiltrators who had been coming into the country again in the last two weeks from the Jordan side and the Egyptian side. They had been blowing up trucks with people in them, shooting a man on a tractor, killing two women who were gathering oranges in an orange grove at noon-time, blowing up a car that was on the way home from work at the potash factory of Sodom, with four men in it. There was a constant series of episodes in the last two weeks, so that the life of no citizen in the country was safe.

And this was not just happening on the border. The women in the orange grove were right on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. The kid driving the tractor was five miles from Tel Aviv. The men coming home from the potash works at Sodom, up to Beersheba, were thirty kilometers from a border; they were deep inside the Negev, which is the widest point of Israel.

That, then, is the first reason: that the fedayeen activities were increasing and had the country jittery, and that nobody felt safe.

The second reason is that the Jordanian elections took place on Sunday, October 21, and the result of those elections was clear: a pro-Egyptian government came into power. A pro-Egyptian government in power in Jordan is something

that it is impossible for Israel to live with -- simply impossible.

The third reason: The Iraqi troops moved up to the Jordan border -- not into Jordan, but up to the Jordan border. That was also an impossible situation for Israel to contemplate, because Iraqi troops moving into Jordan -- keep the map in your mind -- meant that Iraqi troops could be right next to Latrun, on the road to Jerusalem, and Kfar Saba, ten miles from Nathanya. Those would be troops of Iraq, a country with which Israel is officially at war -- by Iraqi declaration. Iraq never even signed an armistice agreement with Israel -- for whatever you think the armistice agreements are worth (and they aren't worth anything). But at least they constitute a legal peg to hang your hat on. Iraq, I repeat, had never signed an armistice agreement. Iraqi troops on the Jordan border, then --and, as the next step, coming into Jordan -- was an impossible thing for Israel to contemplate.

The fourth reason (and this probably was the one that broke the camel's back): General Amer, the Egyptian Chief of Staff, went to Amman and signed an agreement for a unified field command with Jordan and Syria, so that the three armies -- the armies of Jordan, Syria and Egypt -- would



now be united under the command of the Egyptian High Staff. To Israel, this meant encirclement.

The activities of the fedayeen, the pro-Egyptian result of the Jordan elections, the movement of the Iraqi troops, and the final military encirclement by the creation of a unified command: those four factors were the reasons given for Israel's mobilization of her troops.

It is one thing to announce on Sunday that you are mobilizing fifty or sixty percent, or whatever it is, of your reserves, and it is another thing to make an attack the following night. Therefore I am sure that you are faced with the second question: Why did they attack on Monday night? (The attack was launched at six o'clock on the night of Monday, the 29th.)

The reason for that is very simple: Everyone in Israel firmly believes (or believed: I should put it in the past tense) that Egypt would attack Israel. They firmly believed it. They were convinced that it would come at a time of Egypt's choosing, when Israel was felt to be weakest, most isolated, most vulnerable -- and, conversely, when Egypt felt strongest, best prepared -- and with the rest of the world occupied with other things.

Egypt managed to do everything she could to keep

France occupied with other things. That is the clue: all of the efforts that Egypt made to stir up trouble in Morocco, in Tunisia, in Algeria -- all these things were an attempt to keep French attention diverted.

Then Egypt grabbed the Suez, the world did nothing about it as three months passed by -- and the feeling began to develop in Israel that Egypt was quickly coming to the point at which she felt she could make the next move.

Therefore, if you want my own personal guess (or whatever you want to call it) as to why Israel did this thing Monday night, I would say that she did it because she felt that, at a time of her own choosing, she had to make this move to forestall what would have been the Egyptian move at a time of Egypt's choosing.

Now, what did Israel do Monday night? Did she bomb an Egyptian city? Not one of them. (Not yet -- and she probably won't.) Did she attack Egyptian civilians? Did she even try to engage the Egyptian Army in a head-on battle? Nothing of the sort!

What Israel did, I think -- and I am giving you my opinion -- was the cleverest, most brilliant thing she could have done. It was something that would keep her allied with the Western world (or, at least, France and Britain of

the Western world; it's too bad if America won't come along). What Israel did was just to go for the Suez Canal. That was her way of serving notice on the world that she had no intention of declaring war on Egypt. And she has not declared war. What she wants is what she is entitled to by virtue of the Security Council resolution of 1951: she wants free passage through the Canal. Her military objective -- in so far as it was possible for her to do so -- was to liberate the Canal.

That is why the French at the Quai d'Orsay yesterday afternoon were calling this thing "David and Goliath". The Western world did nothing -- and only Israel went in to liberate the Canal. It is a fantastic thing. This is the explanation, by the way, of why the French and the British moved as fast as they did; it was because they saw what was happening here.

On Monday night, the Israel troops moved out into the desert. (You don't have a map of the Negev here; I suggest that you get hold of one and study it.) They began way down in the south, near Elath. They moved in with two prongs, one towards a place called Kuntilla, where there was an Arab police station which they had attacked once before, and the other towards a place called Ras el Naqb. They hit both places and came together another forty or fifty miles

farther north, at a place called Nakhl, which is about half-way through the Sinai Desert, and they got there in a matter of hours. It is fantastically rocky territory; there are no roads. They battered their way, with armored cars and with tanks and with gun carriers, across terrain that looks like the moon.

The distance from Nakhl, in the middle of the Sinai triangle, over to Suez is 118 kilometers due west, as the crow flies. They covered those 118 kilometers, bringing them up to Suez, in a matter of hours -- by Tuesday morning. It was an incredible operation. It met with practically no opposition, and there were very few casualties on either side, Israeli or Egyptian.

At the same time, there were two other prongs that moved forward. One went farther north, up towards Ismailia, which is in the middle of the Canal zone. The Canal has three vital points: Suez at the bottom, Ismailia in the middle, Port Said on the top -- on the Mediterranean. They got across to Suez, and they sent another column over to Ismailia, and the third column they sent not up to Port Said, but due north to a place called El Arish, which is the main Egyptian forward air base, where a good number of the Egyptian MIG planes were located.

Between El Arish and Gaza there were two Egyptian divisions. Thus, the third column, which came right up the middle of the Sinai Desert, towards El Arish, has now cut off two Egyptian divisions, which are surrounded. It is an incredible military operation in a period of less than seventy-two hours.

As far as the other military operations are concerned, I am sure you know the story of the Egyptian destroyer in Haifa. That is also quite a story. This is one of Egypt's most modern destroyers, the Ibrahim Awal, which sailed up to Haifa and started to shell the city (again, with not very many casualties). The Israeli naval units went out around it -- and, to make a long story short, the Egyptian ship surrendered intact, with a crew of 250 on board. There is now a joke going around: that it's true that a couple of million dollars have been saved by getting another destroyer -- but it's going to cost some money to feed the prisoners.

There was one bombing of Tel Aviv -- in which there were also very few casualties, but some destruction of property.

That is what has happened in a military sense. I have tried to give you the reasons why they mobilized, and I have tried to give you the objectives of the military move.

It is very important that we know that. The objectives of the military move were not to bomb Cairo, not to kill civilians, not to murder women and children, not even primarily to destroy Egyptian military equipment. The objective of the attack was to prevent Egypt from attacking -- and the target selected was the target that was of interest to the free world, which is the Suez Canal.

Well, of course, that was Monday night -- or Tuesday. The French and British, as you know, jumped in very quickly. Eden announced to Commons that Britain and France had issued an ultimatum to Israel and Egypt to cease hostilities and to withdraw ten miles from the Canal. Israel accepted -- pronto. Egypt refused -- pronto.

To my mind, that is another victory in the public relations battle. It seems to me that this is the battle we have to fight in the general world and in the Jewish world. I don't know what the shtimmung is among the Jewish public. Yesterday afternoon, the Israel Ambassador said that the Jews of America ought to stand up with an outcry against the policy of the United States Government. I said to him that they would do no such thing: they're not built that way. The Jews of America are not like the British Jews, who fought the policy of the British Government for twenty years -- and

had the courage to stand up and do it. American Jews won't do it. He said to me: "Well, if American Jews won't do it, then it's azuchen agvay." (He speaks good French, good Hebrew, good Yiddish.)

As I say, I don't know what the shtimmung of Jewish public opinion is. All I know is that, if we have to win a public relations battle in the Christian world, we also have to win it in the Jewish world -- and I think that, in the course of raising the money, we can at the same time disseminate the information.

At any rate, there was this French and British demand: Withdraw, or we'll do something. Israel said "Fine; we withdraw." They had achieved their objective. They had given Nasser a tremendous wallop, had shaken him on his throne, and already had France and England in. What more could you want overnight?

Egypt said "No, we don't withdraw." Thereupon, France and Britain made their announcement that they had decided to reoccupy the Canal zone.

Now, the United States is on the opposite side of this thing. I understand that Eisenhower's statement yesterday was polite, courteous, not full of anger -- not, as the French said yesterday, "mad as a bull". But he indi-

cated quite clearly that the United States is on the opposite side from England and France. (All right -- they don't always have to agree.)

To me, the interesting thing is that Israel, for the first time in her entire international political life, has an ally -- or two, if the British stick. The French will certainly stick, because it is in the French interest, as it is in the Israeli interest, to get rid of Nasser. The British may stick.

It is an incredible thing, then, but Israel may come out of this having weakened Nasser, having gained two important Western allies, having destroyed much of the war-making potential of Egypt (which we have been dead scared of for the past year), and perhaps having opened up the Canal for herself, which, in the small matter of dollars and cents, will save her thirty or forty million dollars a year. I don't know whether any of you are aware of the fact that the Egyptian blockade has been costing Israel that kind of money.

Well, that is where it stands now. I haven't any idea where it will go from here. If the French and the British hold, Israel would like to stop fighting as soon as possible. If the French and the British don't hold, Israel may have to keep on fighting.



I don't know what the United States is going to do. Mr. Eisenhower was very nice and polite yesterday. How will he be next Wednesday? You can't tell. There are too many "ifs" in this situation.

But there is one thing which is no "if": Israel has demonstrated fantastic courage and great skill in international diplomacy, and I hope she will have proved to the world that she is not a bloodthirsty barbaric country trying to go out for military adventures, that she is out for such measures as will take care of her defense and security, and no more -- and that that is all she wants.

The best way for every one of you to get the feeling of this is to read Guy Mollet's statement in the French Parliament yesterday. I have the French text here, in Le Monde. I think that what you ought to do is to get the French Office of Information here in New York --

VOICE: I have an English text. It was in the newspapers yesterday.

RABBI FRIEDMAN: In French, it reads like a gem. (I haven't read it yet in English.) It talks about the courage, about the democracy, in Israel. It talks about what Israel has had to endure from Nasser. It talks about the legitimacy of Israel's move. It is the best explanation and defense of

the Israeli action that you can find anywhere.

VOICE: What paper had it here?

RABBI FRIEDMAN: I have no idea. I only have it in Le Monde, the French paper.

VOICE: There were only excerpts here.

RABBI FRIEDMAN: I think there should be an internal office distribution of this. I am going to have it done in my office and I assume you may want to do it here. Everybody should read that statement; it's only two or three pages long.

A few more words, and I will be finished: Eshkol called the airport just as we were leaving. He was calling from Ben-Gurion's office in Jerusalem. He wanted to know whether I had taken a look out the window to see what was on the field. I told him I had. All up and down Lydda Airport, parked on all landing strips on the side, were French Mysteres, with the French tricolor painted on them. They had been flown in sometime during Monday night, and there they were on the field of Lydda Airport.

Eshkol asked me whether I had counted them. I said "Yes". He said "Don't tell the number". Then he said: "You can see that this is something that goes beyond just an Israeli business. The whole world is involved in this. This

is a big one. We will have much support from the world. What kind of support do we get from the Jews?"

I said: "What do you want?"

He said: "Thirty million dollars."

Now, what the banter over the telephone boils down to is this: We as technicians, we as people who are responsible for mobilizing money, have a duty here -- and I am telling you his words -- which is just as serious as the duty which their technicians have on the other side.

I asked him whether I could stay for several days more, to see the way the thing turned out. He said: "I order you home -- because you can't do a damned thing here, but back in America you can do something."

What it boils down to is this: In the very next days -- and I mean literally days, because I don't want to explain to you what fears I have in the back of my mind about doing it in weeks or months -- I understand that Mr. Eisenhower said something yesterday about economic sanctions --

VOICE: Not in his speech.

RABBI FRIEDMAN: In the next days, we have to pull together all the money we possibly can -- and that means every single penny that is outstanding. Leave alone the business of the 1957 campaign, the business of the November

30th meeting where we will launch again the whole new special fund, where we will talk about pledges for 1957 or even pre-payment of 1957 pledges in quick cash. Leave out the 1957 campaign. You have here, as they have in every other city in the country, money outstanding -- pledges that were made for the special fund, pledges that were made for the regular campaign, pledges that a man has a right to take twelve months to pay. Or, at least, he had that right in April or May, when he made the pledge. He doesn't have that right any more. We need his money.

I would say that all of your effort now has to be concentrated on getting the cash -- cash -- cash -- cash -- cash. It has to come within days -- and we have to have millions of it.

We are calling a big meeting Sunday night. Men are coming in from all over the country -- and they are raring to go. Coming in from the airport this morning, the boys told me that they want to do something. The most practical thing we can do for the next week or ten days or two weeks is to get in every dollar from anybody who owes us any money -- and then let's talk about getting more money from him in a new pledge, in a new account for 1957 or the next special fund or anything else. Clean the books up. It seems to me that

that is the order of the day.

One human interest note: The mission came to an end with the big banquet on Thursday night. Ben-Gurion was to have made a speech to us at this closing banquet. But he came to us earlier in the week, on Saturday, and spoke -- and in a moment I am going to read to you the last paragraph of what he said.

At the closing dinner, however, on Thursday night, Josephthal spoke and said good-bye (he is taking over a new job, but he is still with us), Bill Rosenwald spoke, and other people spoke. And then Mr. Shazar, the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, who is an old magnid [?], got all wound up in his introduction of Ben-Gurion, and he went on and on, and finally ended up by presenting "the head of the government" -- everybody stands up and applauds -- and Ben-Gurion speaks for thirty seconds! He said exactly one sentence. (Remember that this was Thursday night and that nothing happened until Monday night.) He said: "We count on you; we know what we are fighting for, we hope you know what you are fighting for, we hope we are together." And he sat down. Thirty seconds!

The people in the room were astounded. Nobody knew what had happened. Shazar said to him: "That's all

you're going to say?" He gave him the back of his hand. Shazar turned to me and said: "Vilst du zogen eppis?" I said "Not me."

The old man said: "Sing Hatikvah. Finish."

His mind was a thousand miles away. He wasn't going to make any speech that night. He had said it all to us the previous Saturday, and this is what he had said:

"The one certain thing which I can tell you and which you can bring back to the five million American Jews is that, if the worst befalls Israel and we have to fight again for our independence, for our freedom and for our existence, the Jewish youth here will give to it the only thing they have -- themselves. And they will do it without any hesitation, with the greatest devotion and with love.

"There is only one thing which we don't know. And this depends to a great extent on you and our fellow Jews throughout the world in the free countries, where they can help. If we have the minimum of necessary weapons, then the price will be minimal. If not, we shall have to pay a very heavy price. Our youth is ready to pay it. But I am telling you that then we shall lose the flower of Jewish youth."

This was the alternative he was giving us. If they have to fight, they will fight for their independence.

If they have to fight, they will win. But the price they will pay for victory will be either heavy or light, depending upon what we do to support them. I think that that is the story we have to tell the Jews of the United States.

