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"The Old Shall Dream Dreams and the Young Shall See Visions."  
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"THE OLD SHALL DREAM DREAMS  
AND THE YOUNG SHALL SEE VISIONS"

Wexner Heritage Foundation Summer Institute

July 24 and August 7, 1993

Jerusalem

by

Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

I. OPENING SECTION

At the commencement exercise on July 21, Les Wexner told three parables, each with a fundamental moral lesson. One was entitled "You'll Never Change the World" - based on an episode between his father and himself in 1967. At that historic moment, Les told his father that he intended to increase his UJA contribution 10-fold because of the Six-Day War. The older man scoffed and derided the motivation and the deed - "You'll never change the world." Les believed that each one can change the world. And he was right. He certainly changed the business world and the Jewish world greatly. Each one of you can change the way your immediate world think and acts.

On a recent visit to Charlottesville, Virginia, the purchase of a T-shirt reminded me that this year we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Jefferson. He died at the age of 83 on the 4th of July, the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, which he wrote.

We were taught in school that George Washington was "Father of his Country" - but that is not accurate.

Father and mother are the ones who give shape, form, spirit and genetic inheritance to the child.

In that sense, Thomas Jefferson was the intellectual and spiritual father of the spirit which grew into America - the finest democracy the world has ever known - in spite of its imperfections. Give America another century and she will grow into the best which civilized people can create. Jefferson certainly changed his world.

In that same sense, David Ben Gurion is the father of the Third Commonwealth of Israel - not Herzl who understood 19th Century nationalist yearnings but didn't have the Jewish educational and religious background with which to conceive what the new Israel should be in its soul - nor Weizmann who concentrated almost exclusively on obtaining political support from England the later Truman. It was Ben Gurion who dreamed of the ideal state and planned it all his life - based on the twin pillars of Bible and Science, - i.e. the social justice of the Biblical prophets, plus the inventions of modern technology which would eliminate hunger and disease and pave the road to a messianic future.

S. Y. Agnon, the Israeli writer who won the Nobel prize for literature some years ago, wrote an introduction to a Ben Gurion pictorial biography:

## S. Y. AGNON ON DAVID BEN GURION

"Last year, when visiting Mr. Ben Gurion on his 80th birthday, I presented him one of my books bearing the following inscription: 'To David Ben Gurion who was chosen by the Almighty to establish the State of Israel'. The sanctity of a Jewish state lay deep in the hearts of many of us. But examining my inner feelings, were I told: 'Let us establish it!' I would answer: 'By all means, let us do it!' But were I told: 'Let us do it now!' In all honesty, I would answer: 'Let us wait for another 20 years.'

Ben Gurion waited not, but did it with God's blessing. Many generations gave their lives for this sacred goal, but it was he who knew to choose the time and concentrated the tremendous efforts to achieve such a historic and enormous task. What was written in the Bible about another David, King David of the Psalms: "And David was successful in all his doing and God was with him" - was fulfilled in David Ben Gurion. Vision, action, tenacity, dedication and courage combined together in one man to bring about the miracle of the rebirth of Israel.

Many more things are left to generations to come, to be said and admired."

Before recounting Ben Gurion's monumental achievements let us cast a glance at the person himself. Although quite short in stature, his shocking mane of white hair seemed to make him imposing. Thin lips, downturned

mouth, piercing eyes all produced a commanding style of utter seriousness, which was corroborated by his utter lack of social grace and ordinary small-talk. Moshe Dayan once said: "When you go to see him, you must know exactly what you want to say, and how you want to put it." No wasted words here. Ben Gurion seemed most at ease with young soldiers, kibbutzniks and new immigrants.

The man possessed an awesome intellect; taught himself Spanish, in order to read Don Quixote in the original; did the same with Greek in order to read Plato and Homer. His personal library was reputed to contain 20,000 volumes, jammed into 4 rooms of his 6-room house in Tel Aviv. Whether receiving visitors there, or at his office, or later at his 2-room shack in the Negev Kibbutz of Sde Boker, he always sat at a desk, kept his head down, and wrote constantly, even while his visitor or he himself was speaking. Thus, almost every word was recorded, and his diaries, plus histories of Israel, fill as many volumes as Churchill produced.

The two men were similar in many regards - a bull-dog tenacity, an intolerance of stupidity and banality, a driving energy which overcame most obstacles, a fierceness of vision matching that of the greatest Biblical prophets. On the public platform he spoke in a high register, but it did not make him ludicrous. The audience was rapt, knowing it was in the presence of a pure leader who imposed goals and expected all to labor in their fulfillment. Clothes, food, luxuries, money, were all superficialities and of no interest to him. He was obsessed with the task of building a nation, arming it, pressing his people

to love it. He led by example, with unimpeachable integrity, and died in his 83rd year, three months after the Yom Kippur War, alone in a room in the Dan Caesarea hotel, a trunkful of books at his feet, and nothing else. He is a figure of history, who started his country on the path to a greatness which it can truly inherit if its sons and daughters draw even a small measure of inspiration from this giant.

Now let us look at how he forced a nation into the mold of a State.

Here are the seven seminal goals - all of which he achieved.

1. In the 20's and 30's he himself created and worked on the instruments of socialism, which were necessary to assert the theme of Jewish Labor: the Shomrim Society (armed self-defense); the Histadrut; the Labor newspaper Davar; the Kibbutz.
2. He formed an army - merged all the militias, Palmach, Irgun, Stern, one month after the State creation, to avoid Lebanonization; fired on the Altalena - prevented civil war.
3. Nervously, he borrowed \$100 million from Truman, only six months after the creation of the state, with war still raging and the future absolutely uncertain.
4. Opened immigration - doubled the population in the first 30 months while fighting War of Independence.

5. Bold - only 8 years after creation, in 1956, he boldly forced Israel onto the world scene by injecting himself into a British-French plan to attack Egypt. Each of these world powers had its own motive. U.K. was angry over Egyptian nationalization of Suez Canal; France was angry over Egyptian support of Arab rebels in Algeria. And little Israel was annoyed by fedayeen cross-border raids coming from the Gaza Strip. The U.K. and France were happy to have Israel take the lead in the land attack across the Sinai Desert. They would then have to supply only air and sea forces. Eisenhower was furious. Russia threatened to fire missiles against London. And Israel was forced by U.S. to withdraw from Sinai. But Israel was thereafter a permanent figure on the world stage.

As Israel's price for participation in the joint attack, Shimon Peres, the 33-year old director general of the Defense Ministry obtained enriched uranium from France and help in building an atomic reactor at Dimona. Thus, Israel started to become an atomic power as early as 1960, solely through the vision and persistence of Ben Gurion, Peres and Ernst Bergman - Israel's first nuclear physicist.

6. Forced the use of one language - to unify the nation, using the army as a major educational instrument.
7. Stressed above all the mission of the Jewish nation - an Am Segula - a precious people - a nation of special virtues - and he emphasized its spirit (which gave it pride, determination, energy and a world role).

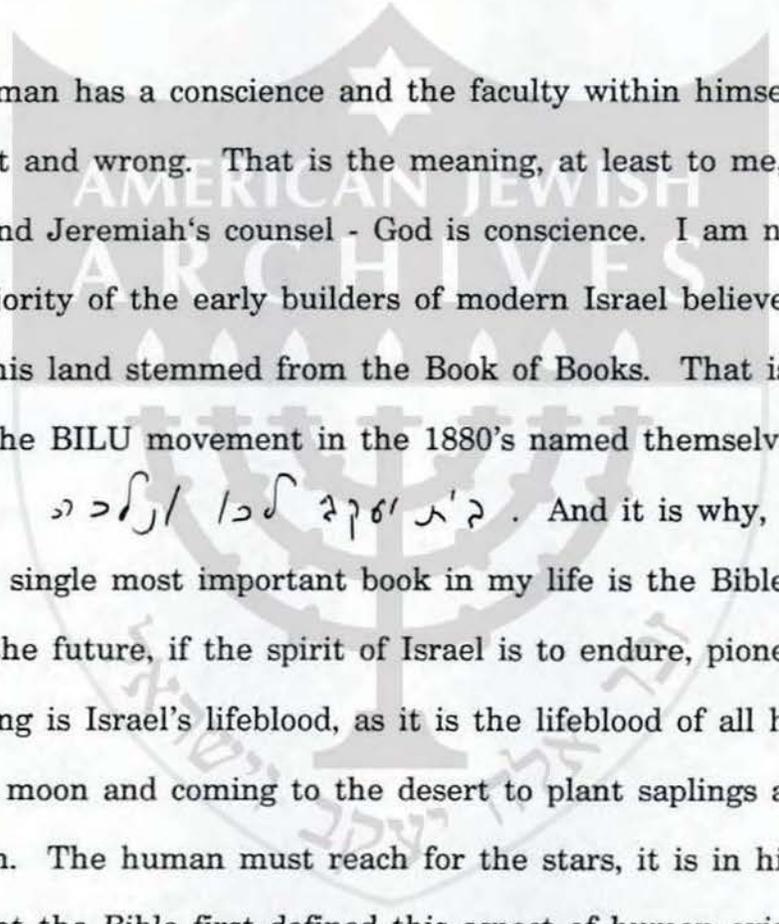
## II. MAJOR ELEMENTS IN BEN GURION'S VISIONARY THINKING

1. Personally an atheist, he loved the Bible, and based his sense of Israel as a precious, special people (Am Segula), on the social justice values of the Biblical prophets, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea. Pragmatically, he brought a religious party into his first coalition, because labor needed their seats to form a majority. He gave them 3 (unimportant, he thought) cabinet portfolios - Religions, Post, Interior. I think he made a bad mistake, which has plagued the government system ever since. Israel needs separation of synagogue and State.

"Since I invoke Torah so often, let me state that I don't personally believe in the God it postulates. I mean that I cannot 'turn to God' or pray to a superhuman Almighty Being living up in the sky. Recently, I was asked whether, in moments of stress, I 'commune' with God. And I shocked my interlocutor by asking him back: 'Does God have a telephone?' Yet, though my philosophy is secular, I believe profoundly in the God of Jeremiah and Elijah. Indeed, I consider it part of the Jewish heritage and the Jewish obligation to hold to this concept of God. Listen to Elijah's famous revelation at Horeb: (1K19:8-12)

'And Elijah went forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God, where he lived in a cave. And Elijah listened for the voice of the

Lord. A great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rock. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind came an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. But then Elijah listened very carefully, and deep within himself he heard a still, small voice (a low murmuring sound). And it was so, the voice of the Lord.'

Every man has a conscience and the faculty within himself to discern between right and wrong. That is the meaning, at least to me, of Elijah's still, small voice and Jeremiah's counsel - God is conscience. I am not religious, nor were the majority of the early builders of modern Israel believers. Yet their passion for this land stemmed from the Book of Books. That is why the socialists of the BILU movement in the 1880's named themselves with reference to Isaiah 2:5  . And it is why, though I reject theology, the single most important book in my life is the Bible. (page 120)

As to the future, if the spirit of Israel is to endure, pioneering must go on. Pioneering is Israel's lifeblood, as it is the lifeblood of all humankind. Going to the moon and coming to the desert to plant saplings are similar acts, in my opinion. The human must reach for the stars, it is in his nature. We have seen that the Bible first defined this aspect of human existence. (Tower of Babel). But the stars are only a symbol. There is much to do on earth. The Jews today have the opportunity missed by so many generations in exile. They can follow the prophets who demanded that Israel be two things: that it

represent a covenant between all the Jews so as to strengthen their cohesion as a people, and that its mission also be to act as an example, 'a light unto the nations'. For me, pioneering is setting the example and there can be no higher Jewish ideal than creating from this bare, besieged little land a rich and enduring way of life that in its plenitude will never stop searching for new areas of endeavor but that will serve as a model to inspire humanity everywhere.

(page 28-29).

"I do not believe that man originates only from dust. I do not even believe that the dust is just plain dust. The ideas of Einstein and Newton, the plays of Shakespeare and Sophocles, the dialogues of Plato and Buddha are not the products of a blind game of atoms and electrons running to and fro, but a living expression of something great and mysterious called "spirit", and this spirit is a part of the awesome and infinite being. We stand before a great and awesome mystery which no one is able to solve. There are those who call it by the name 'God'".

(page 48)

2. Ben Gurion Believed Most Strongly in "Mission" as the Basic Rationale for Israel's Existence in the World.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Our place in the world as a free people will be assured if we help to build a better, juster, kindlier world. Not by wealth or power or numbers, but through the example of our lives shall we help to spread justice and peace among the nations, and thus alone shall we ourselves win peace.

This, then, is the historic mission of Israel in a momentous era. In this vision is the secret of our survival, our resurgence. Not the present, but the vision will guide our steps in the days to come. Where there is no vision, the people perish. (1962)

### 3. Basic Creed of Ben Gurion

#### SCIENCE AND MORALITY (OR BIBLE AND SCIENCE)

The Jews of Yemen and Babylon were speeded to Israel by modern aircraft. But the real driving force was the Messianic vision they preserved in their hearts for 2500 years. Had it not been for that spirit they would not have clung to their Jewishness, they would never have returned to Israel. What is the nature of the spirit we need? First of all, the conquests of science. The value of science lies in enhancing and enriching the spirit. We are few and few we shall remain; our country is small and small it will always be. The sole

greatness which awaits us is greatness of spirit. Science, knowledge of the world and all therein, discovery of the secrets of nature, existence and the universe. Through these we shall rise even higher. The human being is a part of the marvel of existence, and this being has the intellectual gift of probing, observing and comprehending the nature of the external universe.

But science in isolation cannot suffice; it needs moral force to direct it - the great and eternal ethical values of Judaism. Our prophets found and demanded justice, not only in human life, but in the entire cosmos. Isaiah envisions justice and peace as imprinted upon the heavens above and on the earth beneath. He said (45:8):

'Rain righteousness, you heavens,  
let the skies above pour down;  
let the earth open to receive it,  
that it may bear the fruit of salvation  
with righteousness in blossom at its side.  
All this I, the LORD, have created.'"

#### 4. Importance of the Israel Defense Force

Ben Gurion's serious concern with military matters began in 1946 when the Executive of the Jewish Agency appointed him to organize Jewish defense in Palestine. He was shocked by the lack of military preparation he discovered. He journeyed to America to address a secret meeting of 20 wealthy Jews,

arranged by Henry Montor, Abraham Feinberg, and Al Robison, leaders of the UJA, in the apartment of Rudolph Sonneborn, who supplied the first millions required for arms purchases. The Sonneborn Institute, as it came to be known, was the financial backbone of the War of Independence.

Ben Gurion guided the army firmly, inspiring young officers, firing incompetent ones mercilessly, promoting those who possessed new ideas and vitality. He quickly earned the loyalty of the troops, inculcating them with the basic thought that Israel could not afford to lose a war. There would be no second chance. A defeat would be final. He expressed the spirit of the new State and new Army in these words: "There are nations that glory in war. Judaism rejects this as an abomination. The prophets of Israel taught the importance of defense and military preparedness. But they also called upon nations not to 'learn war any more'".

Ben Gurion's brilliance was to establish a citizen's army in which every soldier knew that the fate of the homeland was truly the fate of his family.

"Our soldier must first of all be a citizen of the State in the noblest meaning of that word, a citizen set solid in the Homeland, in his nation's past, in its culture and language, in its creative efforts and vision. The Army must be established upon a brotherhood in arms. Only in such, do barriers of community, party, class, and the rest disappear. Every soldier is equal to the next in standing, in rights and rations, in quarters and uniform. We must give this fraternity a full and positive content, make it

one of mission and duty, of comradeship and cultural progress."

(page 150)

5. Ben Gurion Aligned Israel with America, right from the beginning - in spite of the known opposition of General George Marshall to a Jewish state, for geo-political reasons, not anti-semitic; and in spite of Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett's argument for a bi-national foreign policy based on both Russia and America.

In April 1941 Ben Gurion delivered lectures at a Histadrut ideological seminar. His remarks encapsulate his policy for the years 1938-1948:

"Zionist policy is possible only in a democracy. In the three major powers, where, recently dictatorships have come to power - Russia, Germany and Italy - no Zionist policy has been possible. In these countries, Jews are a negligible factor. Where there is no freedom of speech, thought, press, travel - no Zionist policy is operative. Zionist policy rests on mass action, both of Jews and others."

This political logic dictated that America, with its millions of Jews and its political democracy, could offer Zionism every prospect of success, given the emergence of a strong native leadership. (page 213)

6. Ben Gurion Always Stressed Importance of Good Relations with Diaspora Jews.

"The bond between Israel and the Diaspora is voluntary, free, of the heart, for every Jew is obedient to the State he lives in, in all the spheres of its governance. In that respect Jew and Gentile are alike wherever all citizens are equal in rights and duties.

In international law, Israel, like all other states, is sovereign only over its own inhabitants. But no wise statesman would gainsay the deep emotional rapport between Israel and world Jewry. Enlightened persons are well aware that Israel was not designed solely for the Jews who live in it. This is the central fact in Jewish life today.

A community of destiny and destination joins together indissolubly the State of Israel and the Jewish people. There is an indestructible bond, a bond of life and death between them". (page 78)

7. He Believed in Co-habitation of Jews and Arabs.

"These two semitic peoples, Jews and Arabs, share one mission in this corner of the world. The Jew will not budge hence, nor will the Arab change his place. History has pronounced us neighbors; and it is not

merely a geographical proximity. There is much nearness in language, culture and history. Cooperation between the Jewish people in its land and independent Arabia is an historical necessity and it will come about, for the Arab peoples need it no less than does Israel. It is feasible only on a basis of equality, mutual respect and reciprocal aid. It will convert the Middle East into one of the cultural centers of the world, as in the Bible time it was. Each of the two peoples has something to offer the other, without giving up anything of its own. This fertilizing exchange will be a boon to both, to the Middle East and the whole world".

(page 77)

8. He Believed Strongly in Solar Energy and Water Desalinization. Also, that scientists must foster moral values.

#### SCIENCE AND MORAL VALUES

<sup>17</sup>The purification of sea water by a cheap process is not only a vital need for Israel - it is a necessity for the world. Hundreds of millions on this planet suffer from lack of food, but as yet, only a small part of the earth's surface is tilled. If Israel succeeds in desalinizing the water of the sea, it will bring great benefits to the entire human race, and the task is not beyond the power of Israel science.

The Negev is a region most plentifully provided with energy, for there are no cloudy or rainy days, and practically all the year round the sun radiates to us its tremendous power. Even after all the uranium and thorium deposits disappear from the face of the earth, solar energy will continue to reach us in almost unlimited quantities. It is not impossible that our scientists may be able to use solar energy to purify sea water for the purpose of irrigating the vast wastes of the south and the Negev. But the latent energy of nature hidden in the womb of the earth, in the waterfalls, in the atom and the sun will not be sufficient unless we are able to utilize the most precious energy of all: the moral and spiritual energy latent in mankind." (page 96)

#### SCIENCE NEEDS MORAL DIRECTION

"Science in isolation cannot suffice; it needs moral force to direct it. It needs the great and eternal ethical values of Judaism, expressed with pure and holy passion by the prophets in the Bible. The idea that humankind was created in the image of God, and that all people are the children of God and therefore siblings; the precept 'And thou shalt love thy brother and sister as thyself' - all represent our visions of peace and justice. In no ancient or modern literature is there anything to excel or even equal these concepts.

Only by pursuing the goals of prophetic ethics is it possible to direct the tremendous creativity and power of science so that it may be a blessing to all peoples. Science, unguided by moral values, could be dangerous."

### III. CLOSING SECTION

The first 45 years of Israel's rebirth are done. Magnificent successes are recorded - vast challenges lie ahead. Most of you will live to see the next 45 years. What this Third Commonwealth will look like will depend on what you and the Israelis make it. The next 45 years will be more important than the first. Ninety years is long enough to determine a destiny for hundreds of years to come or to lose a kingdom quickly.

Some in the Diaspora, in my generation, did what was required of us to prepare for independence and the fight for it.

The first time I ever saw Ben Gurion was in the winter of 1945, in a hotel in Paris, where I was asked by him to serve in the Haganah. I agreed without even questioning what I was expected to do. He never said a word to me except "thank you." Later I learned that I had agreed to work in the illegal immigration and arms acquisition.

The next time I saw him was a year later when I took him to a D.P. camp in Germany, where he looked out at the crowd of 5,000 ragged refugees and begged them not to lose hope. Afterward, he cried. By that time, we in the illegal immigration unit, had collected a quarter of a million of the

remaining living Jews in Eastern Europe into 64 camps in Germany and Austria. On that occasion he and I talked in detail about how we would get this manpower to Palestine; how we were gathering not only refugees, but arms of all kinds, including planes, artillery, mortars and ammunition; and he ended our talk in the sharp, brief style which marked his way of paying a compliment: "Good," he said, "Good. We need men and weapons - with these we will win our war of independence - continue your work. Goodbye."

So - in my generation, we knew to a point what we had to do, we tried our best and succeeded. You, in your generation today in the U.S. have a more complex task - not fighting a war, but fighting ignorance and indifference, struggling that the Jewish people in America should grow in strength and knowledge to continue their own creative survival, rather than disappearing through assimilation. If you succeed in that you will also be helping Israel grow to a state of perfection - with technology and morality - or, as Ben Gurion would say - with Bible and Science - fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy to become a light unto the nations, and fulfilling the Jewish people's belief in a messianic destiny for mankind.

Remember what Agnon wrote to Ben Gurion - "Many more things are left to generations to come, to be said and admired." O.K. That is you. If the spirit is strong within you, and you dream the same dreams as the old man did, you will scale glorious heights, you will burst with pride as you hear your children praise you, and you will know in your heart that you did something worthwhile with your life. There is no greater reward. Go forward, continue your work - continue your faith in Israel's people and land. Dream your dreams - see your visions. They will never let you down. Be strong and be brave!



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June 1993

"RECOLLECTIONS"

by David Ben-Gurion

edited by Thomas R. Bransten

Published by Macdonald Unit75  
London, 1970

"Since I invoke Torah so often, let me state that I don't personally believe in the God it postulates. I mean that I cannot 'turn to God' or pray to a super-human Almighty Being living up in the sky. Recently I was asked whether in moments of stress I 'commune' with God. And I shocked my interlocutor by asking him back: 'Does God have a telephone?'

Yet, though my philosophy is secular, I believe profoundly in the God of Jeremiah and Elijah. Indeed I consider it part of the Jewish heritage and the Jewish obligation to hold to this concept of God. Listen to Elijah's famous revelation at Horeb: (1K19:8-12)

'And Elijah went forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God, where he lived in a cave. And Elijah listened for the voice of the Lord. A great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rock. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind came an earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. But then, Elijah listened very carefully. and deep within himself he heard a still small voice (a low murmuring

sound). And it was so, the voice of the Lord.'

Every man has a conscience and the faculty within himself to discern between right and wrong. That is the meaning, at least to me, of Elijah's still small voice and Jeremiah's counsel - God is conscience.

I am not religious, nor were the majority of the early builders of modern Israel believers. Yet their passion for this land stemmed from the Book of Books. That is why the socialists of the BILU movement in the 1880's named themselves with reference to Ezra . And it is why, though I reject theology, the single most important book in my life is the Bible."

Page 120

That is another reason why Jews should come here. Not only so that they can live wholly integrated lives but to render service. We don't need newcomers in the cities. We need them here, in the desert (Sdeh Boker) making a fertile land from sand and rock with the help of modern science, coupled to the sweat of our backs.

"As to the future, if the spirit of Israel is to endure, pioneering must go on. Pioneering is Israel's lifeblood, as it is the lifeblood of all mankind. Going to the moon and coming to the desert to plant saplings are similar acts, in my opinion. Man must reach for the stars, it is in his nature. We have seen that the Bible first defined this aspect of human existence. But the stars are only a symbol. There is much to do on earth. The Jews today have the opportunity missed by so many generations in exile. They can follow the prophets who

demanded that Israel be two things: that it represent a covenant between all the Jews so as to strengthen their cohesion as a people, and that its mission also be to act as an example, 'a light unto the nations' for all mankind. For me, pioneering is setting the example and there can be no higher Jewish ideal than creating from this bare, besieged little land a rich and enduring way of life that in its plenitude will never stop searching for new areas of endeavour but that will serve as a model to inspire humanity everywhere."

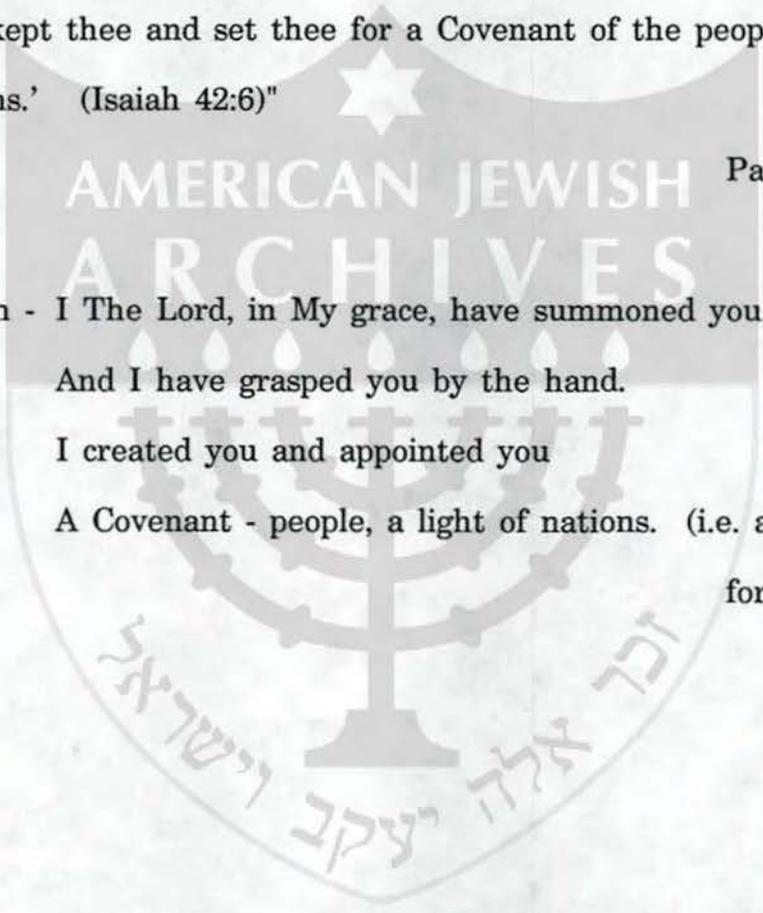
Page 28-29

"Words without deeds are nothing. This I learned in the Bible and for myself from the moment I set foot in this land. Telling people: 'You must be good. You must help others' accomplishes little. One must show the way by example. That is why I live at Sdeh Boker, to underline to all who come in contact with me the importance of this Negev area to our future. Words without the capacity to evoke deeds are meaningless.

I am writing the history of the modern Jewish State. I want the young people of Israel to realize how precious a heritage we of the older generations are delivering into their hands. They have the privilege of carrying our work to fuller fruition and the obligation to do so. They too are under the Jewish injunction to be an "Am Segula" - a nation of special virtues.

You cannot reach for the higher virtue without being an idealist. The Jews are chronic idealists which makes me humbly glad to belong to this people and to have shared in their noble epic. They evolved their invisible God who

imposed a law of love and respect for all beings and things of this earth. They codified this in the Bible and dreamt their dream of redemption in their land. Only a small part of this dream has ever come true and we have borne much suffering because of it. But the dream is there, the moral idea is there, and as in the time of Moshe, the Jews must strive so long as they endure to be an Am Segula. 'I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness and have taken hold of thy hand and kept thee and set thee for a Covenant of the people, for a light unto the nations.' (Isaiah 42:6)"



AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

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New translation - I The Lord, in My grace, have summoned you,

And I have grasped you by the hand.

I created you and appointed you

A Covenant - people, a light of nations. (i.e. agent of good fortune)

June 1993

"DAVID BEN-GURION AND THE AMERICAN ALIGNMENT  
FOR A JEWISH STATE"

by Allon Gal

Published by Indiana U. Press  
Bloomington, IN 1991

Chaim Weizmann was oriented toward Great Britain.

V. Jabotinsky was oriented toward Poland and Great Britain.

By 1938-1939, after the St. James Conference (a failure) and The White Paper (a volte-face), it was clear that a new political orientation was necessary.

Ben Gurion had long been leaning in the direction of America, and moved boldly in that course. Resident in U.S. 1915-18; good relations with Justice Brandeis; ditto Hadassah.

In April 1941 Ben Gurion delivered lectures at Histadrut ideological seminar. His remarks encapsulate his policy for the years 1938-1948:

"Zionist policy is possible only in a democracy. In the three major powers where, recently, dictatorships have come to power - Russia, Germany and Italy - no Zionist policy has been possible. In these countries, Jews are a negligible factor. Where there is no freedom of speech, thought, press travel - no Zionist policy is operative.

Zionist policy rests on mass action, both of Jews and others".

This political logic dictated that America, with its millions of Jews and its political democracy, could offer Zionism every prospect of success, given the emergence of a strong native leadership.

June 1993

"BEN-GURION LOOKS AT THE BIBLE"

by David Ben-Gurion

translated by Jonathan Kolatch

Published by Jonathan David 1972

A select group of students of the Bible met regularly and were called "The Prime Minister's Bible Study Circle". A collection of David Ben-Gurion's addresses to this group was first published in Hebrew in 1969 and in English three years later.

The first address was entitled "Uniqueness and Destiny".

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"By historical uniqueness I mean the intellectual-moral struggle which our people has engaged in with its neighbors since it became a nation, and continues to this very day; and also the messianic vision which was kept alive in the heart of the people throughout the generations.

By the destiny of the age, I mean the ingathering of exiles. This is the central event of our times and is unparalleled in world history.

The Jewish nation has also been engaged in political struggles with its neighbors and more than once has been engaged in battles. There has hardly been a struggle in our history - political or military - which has not been bound

up with an ideological struggle.

We are presently involved not only in a conflict with our Arab neighbors, but, to some extent, with most of mankind as it is organized in the United Nations - because of Jerusalem. Only a blind man does not see that the sources of this conflict are not political, economic or military alone, but also ideological.

On the question of Jerusalem we saw a very strange and mystifying combination. On one side there was arrayed the Catholic bloc, the largest in the Christian world. On another side stood the Moslem bloc. And on the third side, the Communist bloc. The Jewish nation incorporates within itself a moral will and has borne an historic vision ever since it appeared on the stage of history, which have nothing in common with any of these three blocs.

It is impossible to understand Jewish history, the struggle for the survival of the Jewish people, the steadfastness of the people in all periods and all lands, if we do not see the ideological uniqueness of the Jewish people and the stubborn struggle which the Jewish people continue to face to this day. And it will face this struggle until the end of time; until the coming of the messianic age.

Through mastery of the instruments of physical and social science and technology, through the pioneering enthusiasm of those who are realizing a dream - national and universal - the Jewish people will create the image of a model people in its revived homeland which will not disgrace the legacy of its prophets, its scholars, and its leaders from ancient times to this day.

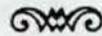
The forces which face us in the ideological struggle are inestimably greater and more numerous than those confronting us on other fronts. But let us not panic. An intellectual struggle has never been decided by armies and by might, but by spirit. And the spirit of Israel will not forsake us. Our 4000 years of history testifies to this".

Pages 1-4

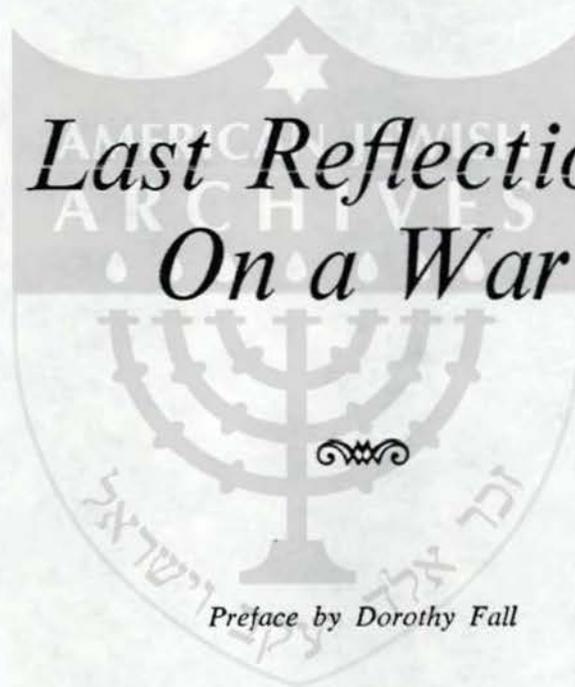
"I do not believe that man originates only from dust. I do not even believe that the dust is just plain dust. The ideas of Einstein and Newton, the plays of Shakespeare and Sophocles, the dialogues of Plato and Buddha are not the products of a blind game of atoms and electrons running to and fro, but a living expression of something great and mysterious called "spirit", and this spirit is a part of the awesome and infinite being, no less than are the organs of man part of the human being. We stand before a great and awesome mystery which no one is able to solve. There are those who call it by the name "God".

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BERNARD B. FALL

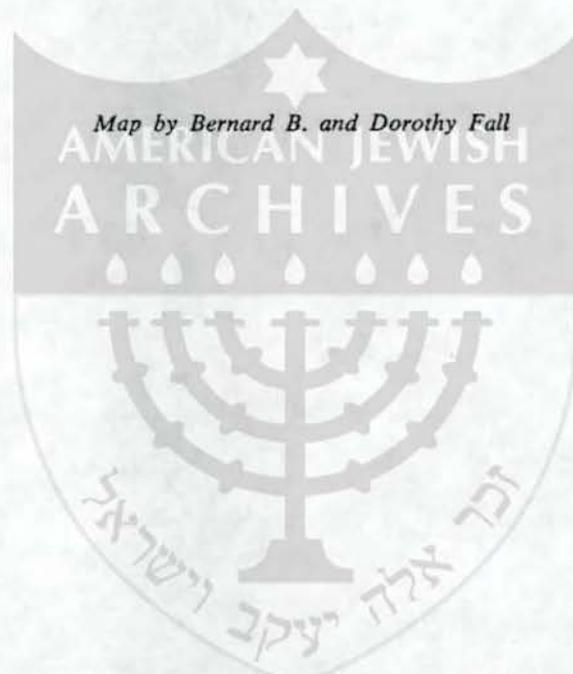


*Last Reflections*  
*On a War*



*Preface by Dorothy Fall*

DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC., GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK



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Viet-Nam against further Western encroachments. The left argued that the French had a left-wing government—wasn't Maurice Thorez, the French Communist Party leader, vice-premier of de Gaulle?—which would surely give independence to Viet-Nam eventually, and would provide it in the meantime with badly needed assistance. Ho had witnessed the sterile debate in silence. But then he suddenly sprang up, looked both disputing groups in the eye, and explained:

"You fools! Don't you realize what it means if the Chinese stay? Don't you remember our history? The last time the Chinese came, they stayed one thousand years!

"The French are foreigners. They are weak. Colonialism is dying out. Nothing will be able to withstand world pressure for independence. They may stay for a while, but they will have to go because the white man is finished in Asia. But if the Chinese stay now, they will never leave.

"As for me, I prefer to smell French sh— for five years, rather than Chinese sh— for the rest of my life."

On March 6, 1946, Ho and the French signed an accord, permitting French troops to return for five years, with France recognizing the DRVN as a "Free State within the French Union." On May 31, Ho and his entourage left by French warship for a state visit in France to negotiate the final independence treaties with the former colonial power. What followed next is too complicated a story of French blunders to be told here. Involved in their own perennial government crises (Ho had to wait until July 6 'till the French could form a government to negotiate with him!), the French left colonial matters to the "specialists," i.e., the ultra-conservatives of the Ministry of Colonies. Ho, for his part, naïvely overestimated the power of his old Socialist and Communist friends in Paris, or even their willingness to grant independence to his country. Settled down in a minor hotel near the Place de l'Etoile, graced for the occasion by a red carpet as befits the protocol for a chief of state, Ho had time not only to ponder his own fate, but to become acquainted with another nationalist awaiting a change in *his* country's fate at the hands of another colonial power: David Ben-Gurion, the future president of Israel.

At that time, Ho was deeply moved at hearing Ben-Gurion's ac-

Royal Monceau

#### LAST REFLECTIONS ON A WAR

count of what had happened to the Jews during the Second World War, and British intransigence bode ill for Israel's future, while Viet-Nam's case seemed on its way to an early settlement. He spontaneously offered Ben-Gurion Hanoi as the location for an Israeli government-in-exile; an offer which the Jewish leader did not turn down: after all no one else had thus far made as generous a proposal. But Ho's own affairs were suddenly taking a downward turn. All the fine promises made by the French liberals in the spring were now slowly being whittled down to nothing by the "specialists" from the rue Oudinot, where the Colonial Ministry was located. In fact, as Ben-Gurion was to note wryly, Ho's descending fortunes could be measured by the progressive shrinking of the protocolary red carpet. On Ho's arrival, it had extended from the sidewalk to his room. As the summer wore on, it was limited to the lobby, then to the staircase, and finally, simply to the corridor in front of Ho's suite. Finally, on September 14, 1946, the break came. The French proved unyielding on the unification of Viet-Nam and at home not only the right wing but now the left wing as well was clamoring for results. In a dramatic night session, Ho and the French Overseas Minister, Marius Moutet, signed a *modus vivendi*—an "agreement to disagree"—after Ho had vainly pleaded with him to relent somewhat on the terms. Moutet, "boxed in" by his own "hawks," explained that he was unable to do so, and Ho signed, muttering audibly: "I'm signing my death warrant."

He also knew that the failure to agree meant eventual war with France. Dead tired, he walked into Ben-Gurion's room and said: "There is nothing left but to fight," a lesson that Ben-Gurion was not to forget a few months later. As Ho walked back to his room, the remaining red carpet in front of his door had disappeared altogether. On December 19, 1946, at 8 p.m., nearly all the French electrical plants throughout Viet-Nam, carefully sabotaged in advance, blew up. The lights went out all over the country as Viet-Minh shock troops began to attack French garrisons from south of Saigon to the Chinese border. The war for the reunification, with minor cast changes in the South, is still going on to this day.

For Ho, at 56, this meant a brutal change of roles. Until now he had been the underground agent, the Comintern *apparatchik*, writing reports and holding together networks of agents. At best, he

## BEN-GURION AS I KNEW HIM

SHIMON PERES

On David Ben-Gurion's 80th birthday, we went, as was our custom each year, to visit him at his home in Kibbutz Sedeh Boker in the Negev.

We flew there by helicopter. I had invited the great Israeli writer and Nobel laureate S. Y. Agnon to join us. Agnon loved Jerusalem and was a virtual recluse in the city. He was disinclined to wander afield and did not take part in social gatherings. Thus, this was the first time in his life that Agnon had seen the desert landscape south of Beersheba, a panorama which both amazed and disturbed him. Although he was a religious man, he voiced strong words of rebuke against God, assuming that from the helicopter they would reach their destination more quickly. He looked down on the bare hills, on the barren stones, on the strange shapes which the canyons carved in the terrain, on the reddish peaks—and argued with his Maker that it was not right to be so cruel to nature, to run rampant with the land, making it intractable and forbidding, without according man, who is also the handiwork of the Creator, a foothold in this broad territory.

When we approached Sedeh Boker, Agnon turned to me with growing emotion and said: "I have always believed that, in the final analysis, every Jew is just a little frightened of the Gentiles—of the Gentile as a man, and of the Gentile landscape. It would appear that Mr. Ben-Gurion is not afraid of the Gentiles." And, with a mischievous sparkle in his eyes, he added: "It seems that Mr. Ben-Gurion is not afraid of the Jews either." Were he afraid, he would not have brought them to such a place.

Indeed, it may well be that genius begins where fear ends: not to be afraid to question what is known, not to be afraid to be original. David Ben-Gurion did not try to imitate anyone.

He was not an easy person, or a congenial one, or a person who strove to be liked by others. He did not indulge others and did not expect or want to be pampered by them.

His personality was very complex, distinguished as it was by an exceptionally strong character, tremendous willpower, and stubbornness. He was also endowed with a mind that sought out what was new and was capable of penetrating the deepest recesses.

David Ben-Gurion was a decisive man who formulated an opinion on any subject with which he came into contact. He questioned the accepted interpretation of the Exodus from Egypt. He wrote to President Kennedy that he must establish relations with the People's Republic of China, ten years before the United States did so. He

debated Buddhism with U Nu, and he argued that Spinoza was the greatest Jewish philosopher. He was convinced that energy would be derived from the atom, that seawater would be desalinated, and that an artificial brain would be developed.

But, first and foremost, he challenged every Jew who believed it was the fate of the Jews to live in the Diaspora, and he believed that the Jews could be a nation of farmers, industrialists, soldiers, pioneers, and not only scientists and intellectuals. He decided that the time had come to establish a Jewish state, yet once it had been founded, he was not satisfied—it must be an exemplary state, a chosen state.

Ben-Gurion could not for a moment remain noncommittal in his views. He did not know a moment of neutrality. He was always prepared to acquire knowledge, but he refused to abandon his views. Ben-Gurion once said to me, "All experts are experts on what was. There are no experts on what will be."

He enjoyed arranging his 20,000 books (in seven different languages) on the shelves of his library, books that accompanied him in every period of his life: philosophy and sociology, geography and history, biology and physics. He died an inquisitive man. He certainly never knew a day of boredom, even when he lived alone.

When Ben-Gurion decided to settle in Israel, he studied the geography of the land and traversed the country on foot. Finally, together with his friend Izhak Ben-Zvi, he published a geography, *The Land of Israel, Past and Future*, in which he wrote:

If we wish to fix the borders of the Land of Israel today, especially if we view it not only as the legacy of the Jewish past, but also as the land of the Jewish future, of Jewish settlement, and of the Jewish National Home—we can take into consideration only the ideal borders promised to us by tradition, which are too broad in the conditions prevailing today. We cannot simply adhere to the historical borders, which have so often changed and are the product of chance, which are generally too narrow and do not conform to the natural lay of the land.

In 1931, Ben-Gurion published the book *Our Neighbors and Ourselves*, calling for coexistence between Jews and Arabs, which he believed to be vital for the return of the Jewish people to their land. While serving as secretary-general of the Histadrut from 1921-1933, he read widely on socialism and revolution, and on the psychology of the masses. He once told me that he used to spend entire days in the New York City Public Library immersed in the study of psychology books. He read the works of Marx, and all those of Lenin. He preferred Marx for his intellectual ability but was not won over by his teachings. Marx, he claimed, was not a Marxist. Lenin he preferred as a leader, although he totally rejected the Communist regime.

In fact, my first conversation with Ben-Gurion was about Lenin. While still a very young man, I was invited to accompany him from Tel Aviv to Haifa. He was already then a legend in the eyes of the people, and I was very excited at the chance to speak with this great man. To my disappointment, I found that Ben-Gurion was not a man of idle talk, and during most of the journey he remained immersed in his own thoughts and said almost nothing. Only on the outskirts of Haifa did he turn to me and say, "You know, Trotsky was not a true leader." To this day, I do not know what brought Trotsky's spirit into the car on the road to Haifa. But since I wanted to pursue the conversation, I asked, "Why?" At which Ben-Gurion exploded and said,

"What is 'no war and no peace'? This isn't policy; this is a Jewish invention. Either go to war and take the risk, or make peace and pay the price. Lenin, who was intellectually inferior to Trotsky, became the leader of the Russians because he took decisions."

However, his admiration for Lenin did not prevent him from attacking Leninist Communism in a long series of strongly worded polemic essays, and he was even more strongly opposed to Stalinism.

Ultimately, he published his own view of socialism: *From Class to Nation*. He did not seek a class war. He aspired to a time when the entire nation would become a nation of workers, a productive nation of citizens who would live by the work of their hands and their minds. He saw the role of the working class as constructive, not revolutionary: to rebuild the people, to cause the land that had been laid waste to bloom again. He believed that only the people—and not necessarily the wealthy and distinguished members—were capable of rebuilding themselves, of bettering themselves, of becoming the true architects of their new homeland. He was opposed to the self-isolation of the workers. He called for the dissolution of the labor trend in the schools, a trend which he himself worked to establish as secretary-general of the Histadrut, in favor of state education. He sought education to labor values for all children, not particularistic education for one segment of the people. He also advocated the transformation of the Histadrut labor exchange into a state labor exchange.

Ben-Gurion visited the Soviet Union, at the head of a Histadrut delegation attending an agricultural exhibition, in the early 1920s. He came to view Communism as the antithesis of Judaism. The Bible, and not *Das Kapital*; Hebrew, not Russian; the Land of Israel, and not the Soviet Union—these would save the Jewish people from their fate. The debate over the position to be adopted toward the Soviet Union continued even after the establishment of the State of Israel. It also caused a split within the Israeli workers' movement for many years. Until the "Doctors' Trial," portraits of Stalin were displayed in more than a few homes of leaders of the Israel labor movement. If not for Ben-Gurion, together with his friend and companion Berl Katznelson, it is doubtful whether the labor movement would have freed itself from the effects of this great revolution.

Ben-Gurion also contended with the religious public, which in part identified with the Zionist movement and in part rejected it, as well as with the Revisionists. He argued that Judaism is not a religion, but a faith. To Ben-Gurion, the classical religions are, in effect, vast administrative systems, which serve as intermediaries between God and the congregation of the faithful. According to the Jewish view, man was created in the image of God, and between God and man, every man, no intermediaries are needed. Judaism, in his view, is universal, inclusive, all-embracing. It is a compound that grew out of the history of the Jewish people as a nation. He therefore criticized the institution of the rabbinate, which tried to assume powers not founded in Jewish tradition.

As for the Revisionist movement, Ben-Gurion felt that it had introduced into Zionism a large dose of rhetoric and gesticulation, as an apparent shortcut. He

believed that this movement disregarded two fundamental precepts of authentic policy: that one must build gradually and methodically, and that the time for joyful declarations was after the completion of the work, not before. Grandiosity, Ben-Gurion believed, was the illegitimate child of false messianism, and had turned the heads of the leaders of the Revisionist movement.

The disagreement with the Revisionists continued even after the establishment of the state. The I.Z.L., the military arm of the Revisionist movement, brought an arms ship, the *Altalena*, to the shores of Israel, and Ben-Gurion suspected that they intended to use these arms for combat in areas not included within the partition map. He did not hesitate to order the Israel Defense Forces to fire on the ship, believing that the I.Z.L. had not accepted the authority of the new national government. Thus he put an end not only to debate, but also to secession.

In his later years, Ben-Gurion fought still another battle: the "Lavon Affair." Pinhas Lavon, then minister of defense, had accused the head of army intelligence, Binyamin Jibli, of having ordered acts of sabotage in Egypt without explicit approval. Jibli claimed that Lavon had issued such an order. The cabinet wanted to act as judge, but Ben-Gurion argued that "ministers are not judges." Very few joined him in this battle, which he waged with unbelievable intensity, despite his advanced age.

Ben-Gurion's relationship with the intelligentsia was ambivalent. He respected them, because he knew that without a deep-seated partnership between the workers and the intelligentsia, it would be difficult to create a focus of unity within the people. He was also wary of them, because he saw in them much intellectual weakness, hesitancy, and a tendency toward criticism for its own sake.

There were many intellectuals whom Ben-Gurion admired in the fields of philosophy, history, literature, and poetry, and he himself had launched several literary enterprises. He initiated the translation into Hebrew of great works of world literature. He encouraged archaeology and the writing of history. He transformed the Israeli army into a school for the teaching of Hebrew. He encouraged instruction in the Hebrew language for all ages, and through his efforts the Bible became a more widely read book. He corresponded with the greatest thinkers and writers, studied their views, and continually engaged them in dialogue.

Although his relations with the intelligentsia embodied conflict, they were also ones of kinship. The context of all his intellectual disputes was mutuality and respect. As a result, no unbridgeable rift arose between his adversaries and himself. That, too, may have been a manifestation of his greatness.