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"Building a State, Creating a Nation." 12 July 1991.

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SPEECH GIVEN AT
SUMMER INSTITUTE - JERUSALEM

12 July 1991

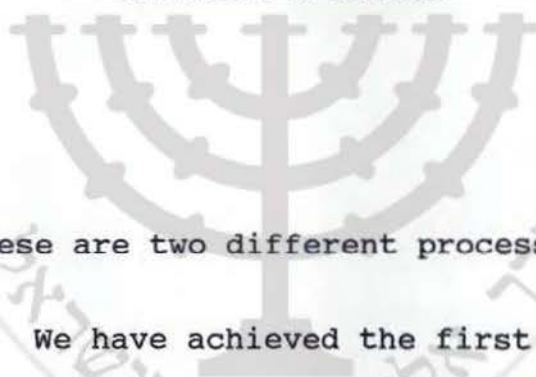
by

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AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

BUILDING A STATE:

CREATING A NATION



These are two different processes.

We have achieved the first
and only begun the second.

I. BUILDING A STATE

ALL THE FUNCTIONS AND FUNCTIONARIES

OF A STATE ARE IN PLACE

President and Flag

Prime Minister + Ministers + Deputy Ministers -

Many Many

Cabinet

Parliament

Army AMERICAN JEWISH

Police ARCHIVES

Supreme Court

100 Ambassadors

Taxing Power

Local Governments

The State has successfully and quickly become a member of that elite group of no more than a few dozen in the western industrial world entitled to be called practicing democracies, which provide freedom and opportunity to their citizens.

Creating the nation will take longer, for its attributes are more complex and require the ingredient of time to come to fruition.

So was it in the United States as well. The state was formed, through political education, revolution and war, in the

first half of the 17th century. The nation is still being created at the end of the 20th. Many major internal matters, such as race, poverty, health and others, are still swirling around in the blender waiting to take final form. Building a State is mechanical, essentially done, and beyond our ability to contribute to it.

II. CREATING A NATION is Much More Interesting, and Open to your Generation's Taking a Part in it.

A nation must possess several fundamental characteristics, some of which Israel has begun to acquire, others are still only on the horizon.

1. A Nation Needs Heroes - Myths - Legends

These are the nourishing backdrop which provides a nation with a sense of its worth.

- a) We have in our distant past some of the best of these heroes and legends in the world:

Moses surpasses Confucius and Buddha

David's life and writings rank with the Iliad
and Odyssey

Solomon's empire equalled Charlemagne's,
relatively

Maimonides is our Aristotle

Mishnaic Law matches Roman and Anglo-Saxon

- b) We are not rich in modern founding fathers - possessing only 3 - Herzl, Weizmann and Ben Gurion. These numbers are not the equal of Washington, Madison, Jefferson, Franklin, Hamilton, Monroe and all the others. But nothing can be done about it. Future generations will have to enlarge the images of our three, or revert always to our mythic ancient figures for inspiration.

2. A Nation Needs a Unifying Political Philosophy

Sometimes called a Constitution or Magna Carta. We don't have this in Israel but it is on the current immediate agenda, together with the issue of electoral reform. We do have a wonderful basic document - the Declaration of Independence - containing all the ideals relating to equal human rights and freedoms. We know, therefore, what we want to incorporate into a constitution, and already have a dozen Basic Laws, passed by the Knesset, which will also ultimately be blended into a constitution. This will be a secular state, in the sense of separation of religion from

government, but the Jewish nation is unique in the sense that religious values, observances and rituals will always be part of the national consciousness and identity. The secular Jews do have the sense of nationhood and peoplehood. All Jews in the world bear two identities - that of the state whose citizens they are and that of the heritage into which they were born or chose to join. Thus the dual identity of Israeli plus Jew will mark all citizens of Israel, except those who profess a different religion, and they are called Israeli - Moslem or Israeli - Christian, etc. We are not united - and the slogan may be inept in many ways - but with regard to peoplehood we are one.

3. A Nation Needs Borders

We don't have them yet.

Armistice lines, cease-fire lines, green lines and red lines - but no fixed border lines. These require peace treaties with our neighbors, and such treaties we don't have. The inflexibility of Israel regarding the territories is an attitude which some deplore, because they believe it discourages the Arabs from coming to the table; yet the inflexibility of the Arabs is deplored by others, because all 21 Arab States (except for one) refuse to acknowledge that Israel is here to stay and they will not deal with her except on the

battlefield. So we may not have borders for a long time.

4. This Nation Needs a Continuous Enlarging of its Population And Blending of The New Elements As They Come in

This never finishes - America 350 years old - is always taking in new people - cultures - languages - all these add to strength and beauty - a polyglot tapestry. We Jews are better off - for ours is the ingathering of a tribe - everyone already has something in common before even arriving.

This process is going along fine - it takes time - it takes place in bed.

The land will grow to 7 million in the next quarter-century, and up to 10 in the next three-quarters.

5. This Nation Needs to Settle its Whole Space

It took more than a century for Americans to settle in to their huge space. They pioneered, moved westward, occupied the vast areas acquired in the Louisiana Purchase, flung the railroad to the Pacific, fought with the native Indians and constantly pushed them off their ancestral land (an ignoble chapter of American

cheating, lying, reneging on formal promises, even those signed by American presidents.)

But Israelis have two large territories - the Galilee and the Negev - which can absorb the millions - and yet there is no truly serious settling of either region, even after a half-century. The much smaller areas of the West Bank have been given preference in recent years for political and religious reasons. This decision has not cemented the nation, rather it has caused divisiveness.

6. The Nation Needs a Belief in its Future

I conclude with a request that you take the experiences of these past nine days and sift them through the computer in your brain. Decide what you believe about the 5 main issues: settlements in the West Bank; a demilitarized Palestinian state; proper methods of absorbing the huge waves of immigrants; adding economic strength through increasing exports by finding buyers; and improving the electoral and social systems by which this nation is governed.

After you have decided your position on these 5 matters, the next step is to determine what you can do, personally and by mobilizing others, to help achieve

the goals implicit in each item. Don't listen to anyone who tells you to stay out of Israel's internal affairs. That is arrogant and incorrect advice. You may not have a voice in matters of state, but you certainly have a role in matters of nation. You may not be a citizen of the Jewish State but you are a wonderful valuable part of the Jewish nation.

The nation will be created - fully, fruitfully, successfully. Its children here (immigrants and native-born) will provide its future, as they have given it its life up to now. And you also give it its life, by acting as true and loyal soldiers in the far-flung communities of its nation's people.

THE SILVER TRAY

by Natan Alterman

A state is not handed to
a people on a silver tray.

-Chaim Weizmann

..."And the country is quiet. The red eye of heaven
blinks slowly, growing dark
on the smoking borders.
And the nation stands - heart torn but breathing -
to receive the miracle

that is like nothing else.

She readies herself for the ceremony. she rises
facing the moon and stands, before dawn,
wrapt in festival and terror.

-Then, from the darkness, a girl and a boy
will come forth
and slowly, slowly, walk towards their people.

Dressed in workclothes, wearing web belts and heavy boots,
they are climbing the path,
keeping silence.

They never changed clothes
or washed away the footprints
of the day of labor and the endless night of gunfire.

Infinitely weary, having taken vows not to rest,
and dripping with the dew of Hebrew youth --
quietly the two of them draw near
and stand motionless.

And there is no way of telling
whether or not there are bullets in their flesh.

Through wondering tears, the people stare.

"Who are you, you silent two?"

And they reply:

"We are the silver tray upon which the
Jewish State was served to you."

And speaking, fall in shadow at the nation's feet.

Let the rest in Israel's chronicles be told."

And so it will continue to be until both state and nation
are firmly rooted through the labor, love and sacrifice of
all of us, to live in history as the Third Jewish
Commonwealth, which may turn out to be the best of all.

