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A Great Moment in History - The Re-Establishment of the Jewish  
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**A GREAT MOMENT IN HISTORY**  
**THE Re-establishment of the Jewish State**

By  
**Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver**



**The Temple**  
**Sunday Morning, May 16, 1948**

Rough Draft

On Friday afternoon last at 4:00 P.M. on the Eve of the Sabbath, this proclamation for the establishment of the Jewish State in Palestine was made to the world by the Jewish nation in Palestine.

The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and national identity was formed. Here they achieved independence and created a culture of national and universal significance. Here they wrote and gave the Bible to the world.

Exiled from Palestine, the Jewish people remained faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and restoration of their national freedom.

Impelled by this historic association, Jews strove throughout the centuries to go back to the land of their fathers and regain statehood.

In recent decades they returned in their masses. They reclaimed a wilderness, revived their language, built cities and villages, and established a vigorous and ever growing community, with its own economic and cultural life. They sought peace, yet were even prepared to defend themselves. They brought blessings of progress to all inhabitants of the country.

In the year 1897 the first Zionist Congress, inspired by Theodore Herzl's vision of a Jewish state, proclaimed the right of the Jewish people to a national revival in their own country.

This right was acknowledged by the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, and re-affirmed by the mandate of the League of Nations, which gave explicit international recognition to the historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and their right to reconstitute their national home.

The Nazi holocaust which engulfed millions of Jews in Europe proved anew the urgency of the reestablishment of the Jewish state which would solve the problem of Jewish homelessness by opening the gates to all Jews and lifting the Jewish people to equality in the family of nations.

Survivors of the European catastrophe as well as Jews from other lands, claiming their right to a life of dignity, freedom and labor, and undeterred by hazards, hardships and obstacles, have tried unceasingly to enter Palestine.

In the Second World War, the Jewish people in Palestine made a full contribution in the struggle of freedom-loving nations against the Nazi evil. The sacrifices of their soldiers and efforts of their workers gained them title to rank with the people who founded the United Nations. On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution for reestablishment of an independent Jewish state in Palestine and called upon inhabitants of the country to take such steps as may be necessary on their part to put the plan into effect.

This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to reestablish their independent state may not be revoked. It is, moreover, the self-evident right of the Jewish people to be a nation, as all other nations, in its own sovereign state.

Accordingly, we, the members of National Council, representing the Jewish people in Palestine and the Zionist movement of the world, met together in solemn assembly by virtue of the natural and historic right of the Jewish people and of the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

We hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine, to be called Israel.

We hereby declare that as from the termination of the Mandate at midnight this night of the 14th to 15th of May, 1948, and until the setting up of duly elected bodies of the State in accordance with a constitution to be drawn up by a constituent assembly not later than the first day of October, 1948, the present National Council shall act as the Provisional State Council, and its executive organ, the national administration, shall constitute the provisional government of the State of Israel.

The State of Israel will promote the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on precepts of liberty, justice and peace taught by the Hebrew prophets; will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of shrines and holy places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the charter of the United Nations.

The State of Israel will be ready to cooperate with the organs and representatives of the United Nations in the implementations of the resolution of November 29, 1947, and will take steps to bring about an economic union over the whole of Palestine.

We appeal to the United Nations to assist the Jewish people in the building of its state and admit Israel into the family of nations.

In the midst of wanton aggression we call upon the Arab inhabitants of the State of Israel to return to the ways of peace and play their part in the development of the state, with full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its bodies and institutions, provisional or permanent.

We offer peace and amity to all neighboring states and their peoples, and invite them to cooperate with the independent Jewish nation for the common good of all. The State of Israel is ready to contribute its full share to the peaceful progress and reconstitution of the Middle East. Our call goes out to the Jewish people all over the world to rally to our side in the tasks of immigration and development, and to stand by us in the great struggle for the fulfillment of the dream of generations - the redemption of Israel.

Thus, my dear friends, after 1,878 years the Jewish State has been reestablished, and thus begins the third Commonwealth in that <sup>historic</sup> story of ancient land of our people. For nearly 4,000 years from the day of Abraham, the destiny of our people was inseparably

linked up with that land - Palestine. From the days of Abraham, to whom God said: (Hebrew) "Unto thy seed will I give this land." And from that land the people of Israel was thrice exiled and thrice it returned to it. The hold of the land upon the people and the yearning of the people for the land were never broken.

The first exile began, as you will recall, with the voluntary ~~immigration~~<sup>emigration</sup> of the children of Jacob to Egypt. But what was to be a temporary ~~immigration~~ resulted in a prolonged period of exile lasting for nearly 400 years. In Egypt our people remained slaves until the emancipator, Moses, rekindled in the spirits of these Israelitish slaves the love and the passion for freedom and independence, and the desire to return to Eretz Yisroel - the land flowing with milk and honey - and so, they left Egypt and crossed the Red Sea and wandered for 40 years in the desert until they came to the Jordan and under the leadership of Joshua, they crossed it and fought their way back into their country. Step by step and foot by foot they fought their way back inspired by words spoken by Joshua: (Hebrew) "Do not be afraid - do not be terrified. Be strong and of good cheer." Thus ended the first exile.

And Israel was reestablished in the land of Israel and for hundreds of years it created <sup>there</sup> ~~their~~ a marvelous civilization - the Bible, the prophetic ideals which have since become the spiritual heritage of all mankind.

The second exile began with the destruction of Judea in the year 586 before the Common Era when the Babylonians overran Palestine and exiled to the land of Euphrates the best, the strongest, the noblest of the people of Judea. That exile, fortunately, did not last as long as the Egyptian exile - only for half a century. And when Cyrus the Great conquered the Babylonians he gave proclamation to the Jews in exile to return to Judea. "Who among them, among all the people who wishes to return, may. His God be with him and let him go back to Jerusalem which is in Judea."

But that return also was not unaccompanied with violent resistance on the part of the enemies of Israel. The enemies of Israel, in the days of Nehemiah, who brought back the first contingent from Babylonia, did all possible to interrupt the progress.

They misrepresented their purposes to the king of Persia and later on  
as today  
all the neighboring peoples around Jerusalem/gathered themselves together to keep the  
Jews from rebuilding the walls. Nehemiah gave the people the word to resist the enemies,  
and at the same time, to continue the work of building the walls so that, as we  
read in the book of Nehemiah: "The returning exiles rebuilt the walls with one hand  
and with the other they held their weapons." And thus, ended the second exile.

And for thousands of years thereafter the Jewish people in Palestine  
culture,  
their faith, religion and/ and from Judea went forth the missionaries of a new faith  
inspired by Judaism which has now become the faith of Christendom.

third exile

But in the year 70 of the Common Era, the ~~restoration of the Jewish state~~ began. The Romans  
conquered Judea, destroyed the Temple and put an end to the independence of the Jewish  
State. This third exile has proved the last and the most tragic of the three. It  
has lasted for nearly 1900 years. The tragic experiences of our people in all parts  
of the world cannot now be reversed by the desire to put an end to the third exile  
among our people through all the dismal generations and  
reached its climax at the close of the 19th century almost in our own day.

And the apex of the end of the third exile, which officially closed on the 14th  
of May on the Eve of the Sabbath, 1948, may be seen in four stages. The first began  
in the 80's of the last century when, as a result of the pogroms in Russia, the first  
definite efforts of organized Jewish cooperation to return to Palestine and establish  
colonies were begun. The early 80's saw the rise of the Zionist program.

The second stage in this final drama came in 1897 when the World Zionist movement  
was organized as a political movement under the inspiration of Theodore Herzl, who issued  
his clarion call to reconstitute the Jewish State in his famous book called, "The  
Jewish State".

The third stage was reached in 1917 when on November 2nd of that year the British  
Empire issued the Balfour Declaration which declared that "His Majesty's Government  
viewed with favor the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people and will

use its best endeavor to facilitate the achievement of this objective". This was the first recognition by a great power - at that time the greatest on earth - of the right of the Jewish people to reestablish a national home in Palestine, and its pledge to help.

The fourth stage came shortly thereafter, when the League of Nations granted Great Britain the Mandate over that country ~~mandate~~ and called upon the Mandatory to secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home there.

The fifth stage was reached last year on November 29th in the General Assembly of the United Nations when, after a checkered career as a mandatory, the British government finally decided to turn to the United Nations after it realized it could not carry out the Mandate, and asked the United Nations to recommend the future government for Palestine, and on that day, after prolonged discussions covering months, after the United Nations had appointed a commission of study and investigation, the Assembly of the United Nations overwhelmingly resolved that in Palestine there be established a Jewish State, and also an Arab State, and that these two states shall live within an economic union which would be advantageous to both.

Thus, the world community recognized the right of the Jewish people to rebuild their State in Palestine.

The sixth and final stage was reached last Friday, when the Special Assembly of the United Nations, which had been convoked at the suggestion of the United States which had in the interim between November and May, for some reason, come to a conclusion that the November 29th decision should be postponed and which had suggested a new temporary regime for Palestine which would postpone the establishment of the Jewish State, on May 14th, last Friday. Two things happened - three things. In the first place the Mandate was terminated officially. Great Britain laid down the Mandate entrusted to it by the League of Nations more than a quarter century ago. On the evening thereafter the Jewish people of Palestine made their proclamation of independence, which I read, proclaiming the establishment of the Jewish State. And the

third dramatic act which took place on that same day, which shall forever remain memorable, is that the government of the United States officially recognized the establishment of the Jewish State, Israel, in Palestine. And thus, the third exile which lasted nearly 1900 years has come to an end, and you and I have been privileged to be the living witnesses of this amazing, this remarkably astounding development.

One is inclined to repeat at such a time that prayer which our forefathers always repeated on such great moments: (Hebrew) "God be praised that He has kept us alive and enabled us to live to see this day."

Now, just as the earlier two exiles did not come to an end unattended by violence and struggle, so history repeats itself. The end of the third exile is also attended by considerable struggle. The enemies are resisting the rebuilding of the Jewish State, but I believe that better than the Jews of olden days were prepared, the Jews of today in Palestine are prepared to defend their new state, and I am confident that they will give an excellent account of themselves. Please be not overly-impressed by the stories that you read about these amazing invasions that will take place, and the great mass movements of Arab enemies from all sides. Just discount that about 95%. There will be fighting - there may be some serious fighting here and there, but as of this moment all the invasion by Arab states is taking place in Arab territory. It is not difficult to fly a plane over Tel Aviv and drop a bomb, and the Egyptians will soon realize that it is not difficult to fly over Cairo and drop a bomb.

Our hearts, of course, are filled with joy. The 126th Psalm has been running through my mind recently - a beautiful Psalm.

What has taken place has been in the first place the testament, the triumphant testament of the invincibility of the spirit of Israel. To be undefeated by 19 centuries of wandering, persecution, oppression, discrimination, hate - to remain strong and vigorous after 4,000 years of history, years which have a way of enervating people

and powerful empires - yet for Israel to remain strong, young, and vigorous after 40 centuries of the most searching and testing kind of existence - to be able to rise out of the holocaust of the Second World War which claimed millions of our people - all this, my good friends, is an unparalleled tribute to a unique phenomenon in history. There has been nothing like it in the history of mankind. It is a tribute also to the faith of our people whose unshaken faith . Everyone said it could not be done. A scattered people, broken by exile, so disunited, so assimilated, so little given to pioneering work - it just could not be done! A big - a barren, unpromising land. Nothing could be done with it. The funds will not be forthcoming - human material will not be available - the world will not permit it. You know all those arguments. It has been going on for years and years, but the faith of our people said otherwise. What a miracle did this faith achieve! How men and women did come, and with what excellence and skill they did reclaim the land, and how the barren land did respond with husbandry, and how Jews poured into the country, and what a fine society was built there, and how heroically Jews have been defending it! Faith said otherwise, and faith triumphed over doubt, over fear - and now, with that same faith, surrounded by enemies, by conditions of uncertainty which would frighten other people, the State of Israel is reestablished as a nation among the nations of the world.

Whenever you lose faith in yourselves, think what a miracle faith of Israel has achieved, and take confidence.

One of the most beautiful refrains that runs through most of the great faiths is phrase, "Do not be afraid. Do not take counsel of fear or doubt. Take counsel of hope, faith in God, faith in yourself, faith in the goodness of the world and the ultimate triumph of what is right." What a tribute all this has been in the last few days to the basic goodness and vision of our own beloved country, the first to recognize the Jewish State of Israel. There were moments and weeks and months of black doubt of the confusion of counsel on the part of our government. I was always of the unshaken conviction that the heart of America was with us. Officials in government occasionally

wavered. Some of our enemies in government circles occasionally triumphed. Other interests for the moment seemed to have made themselves dominant in the counsels of government - pro-British, anti-Russian interests - but I knew that was not America speaking or acting. We had to be unshaken, and the underlying goodwill for a good cause on the part of the American people which had expressed itself in the last thirty years' time for the cause of the Jewish people to rebuild itself as a people again. And therefore, I refused to accept a <sup>reversal</sup> ~~refusal~~ on the part of our government two months ago, as being representative in any way of the spirit of America, and I fought it bitterly as did all our friends. We knew America would not stand that reversal. It was a question of time. America had to return, and this detour / <sup>eventually led back</sup> to the highway of a sound and just foreign policy. Little forces had invaded the vanguards, and they had to be driven out, and they were. We refused to accept substitutes offered to us - temporary trusteeships, political truces. They were traps, and American <sup>did</sup> ~~would~~ return - dramatically, historically, on Friday last to the highway and within a minutes after the termination of the Mandate, and within nine hours after the proclamation of the Jewish State in Palestine, the government of the United States ~~announced~~ that it recognized that State.

It makes us deeply proud of our American citizenship. The great heart of America is within the new Jewish republic. It is good for the Jews of Palestine to know that they have a big brother in the United States of America. They will forever remain grateful to this country. They will forget what happened in the last two months. Two things will remain in the memory of the Jewish people - one, on November 29th, when the countries of the world officially recognized the right of the Jews to reestablish a state in Palestine, and secondly, on May 14th the greatest country on earth was the first to recognize the establishment of the State of Israel.

Now there are breakers ahead, and the Jews have good <sup>practical</sup> / common sense and even in their moments of greatest jubilation <sup>will</sup> not forget the practical problems of the moment. The establishment of the State is the beginning. It has to be strengthened, defended, nurtured. At the moment it is being subjected to attack. The extent of the attacks no one

can foresee. It is unfortunate that the neighboring Arab states have taken the attitude which their fanatical leaders have forced them to take. <sup>It is</sup> ~~It is~~ criminal in that it <sup>unfortunate in that it will never succeed.</sup> violates the charter and/ What are they fighting for - what have they been deprived of? Nothing. Palestine was never theirs. They have been given the right to establish another Arab state. Something which they never had there. This opposition will break - first, because it is a disunited coalition opposition. These Arab states have very little in common and ~~in common~~ <sup>before</sup> long their mutual will assert themselves. Syria and Egypt do not want Abdullah in Palestine, and Abdullah does not want Syria and Egypt in Palestine. The great French statesman, Clemenceau, once remarked that what Napoleon was fighting in Europe was a coalition. This coalition is a very and the Arabs of Palestine have nothing to fight for.

There are breakers ahead but the Jewish people of Palestine will meet them. They named their state "Israel". That is a very significant name given to Father Jacob after he wrestled with the dark angel throughout the night and defeated him, and the angel said to him: "No longer can you be called Jacob because you wrestled with God and with men, and you conquered them." That is the meaning of Israel, and that is the name of the new Jewish State.

We must help Israel. We, the Jews of America and the Jews in the rest of the world. They will have need for a long time of our support - moral, physical, political support. We wish that State to survive - we wish to be proud of it. Every Jewish heart has already beat with pride at what has taken place in recent months. Every heart has been lifted high for what has transpired in these great moments of history. As a by-product of the establishment of the Jewish State there will take place, first, the solution of the problems of Jewish refugees in the camps of Europe. Some 200,000 who have not known a home for years will finally be able to come to the rest and peace of a Jewish home in Eretz Misroel. The Jewish State will probably take in a quarter of a million Jews. That is a large burden to place on a small state. Therefore, when you are asked to contribute large sums to the United Jewish Appeal, please

bear in mind what your money will be used for - to repatriate a quarter of a million of our people

The second by-product of this great achievement is that it will put an end to a great controversy of Israel. A controversy between the Zionists and the anti-Zionists, the anti-Zionists and the non-Zionists, the choice of dual allegiance, cries of Un-Americanism, etc. Those <sup>who</sup> will wish to be citizens of Israel and the Jewish State will go and be citizens of Israel. Those in the United States will remain loyal citizens of the United States; those in England will remain loyal subjects of Great Britain. This long controversy has liquidated itself, and those anti-Zionists who have suffered so much from their groundless fears up to now, I hope will be able to quiet down now to live normal lives. Zionism is no longer a theoretical subject. It is an accomplished fact, and you do not argue out a fact. And if it is all right for the American government to recognize, then it should be all right for American Jews - even suburban Jews.

And so I close with a sentence from the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776, of the United States of America:

When, in the course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to assume among the powers of the earth

I apply that fully to the Declaration of Independence that Israel made two days ago.

We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, appeal to the

That, too, with slight modification could have been written into the Declaration of Independence of Israel, and finally, just as the signers of that Declaration pledged themselves to pledge their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to build the new country which they brought into existence, the Jews of Palestine have pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to defend their State which is beset by dangers similar to those of the 13 colonies, but it took 7 years of war before the 13 colonies could make good what they wrote in the Declaration of Independence. There was

many a Valley Forge before the United States finally became secure and began its great career. We shall stand behind the brave Jews of Palestine who have now pledged their lives, their fortunes and their honor to see that the third and last exile of Israel is definitely, finally, determinately ended.

