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The Second Anniversary of the State of Israel, 1950.

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THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

What Has Been Achieved — What Lies Ahead

Sunday, April 23, 1950

The State of Israel, dear friends, is celebrating today the second anniversary of its establishment, and the Jewish people throughout the world are joining in the celebration. The key ideas which this anniversary celebration suggests are best summarized in the official Independence Day Proclamation which the government of Israel issued this week, and I read it to you.

A year of war, heroism and victory during which the young Israel Defense Army withstood and overcame the armies of the Arab states — such was our first year of freedom. In the second year we were faced with the first phase of the realization of the ingathering of the exiles and the building and development of enterprises on a scale and at a rate far greater than anything we had previously experienced since the beginning of our resettlement 75 years ago. Nearly 400,000 immigrants have arrived in Israel since the establishment of the state.

In the past year, the last Jew stepped out of the Nazi hell camps and the majority of Jewish refugees from the displaced persons camps in Germany, Austria and Italy were absorbed in the homeland. The remnants of the Dispersion in some European countries where our people were threatened with national extinction have been liquidated. The most ancient oppressed of the diasporas in the Arab world, Yemen, is in the process of liquidation.

More than 130 new settlements were established this year throughout the length and breadth of the state. More than 30,000 immigrants from many countries rooted themselves in the soil in various forms of agricultural settlements. An additional 50,000 children entered educational institutions in the state. More than 25,000 housing units for immigrants were built in all parts of the country.

During the year energetic measures were taken for strengthening our security and our defense forces; for the development of the state's democratic institutions and the realization of civic equality without discrimination against community or race; for the continual reduction of the cost of living; expansion of markets; increased labor proficiency; improvements in the quality of our products; full employment; increased industrial production; development of workshops and handicrafts; maintenance of an appropriate standard of living.

Israel was accepted by the United Nations Organization during the year as a sovereign state with equal rights and duties in the family of nations; in the concert of nations Israel's independent voice was heard for the first time in our history, speaking for the safeguarding of peace and the extension of justice throughout the world.

However, the road ahead is still long and hard. Our enemies and opponents continue to threaten us, our very existence, our independence and the borders of our state. The fate of world peace still hangs in the balance. The great majority of our people are still on foreign soil, many of them subject to racial hatred and spiritual extinction. Ninety thousand immigrants still live in camps and in the homeland itself, not yet integrated into the framework of the productivity and national economy of our state.

Our liberated homeland remains largely barren and wasteland, our national economy unstable, the volume of our imports greatly outweighing exports, and we are dependent on foreign currency products. We are still being weakened and divided by tendencies of lawlessness and division, fruits of dispersion and lack of independence.

But, the toil of three pioneering generations was not in vain and we are privileged to witness the beginning of deliverance. Let us rejoice in our festival of independence, and let us gather our strength to realize fully and completely the vision of our deliverance.

Now, dear friends, no Jew anywhere in the world, reading this proclamation, or no man of good will, for that matter, not of the household of Israel anywhere in the world reading it, can fail to be moved, deeply moved and impressed not only by the story of extraordinary achievements recorded in this proclamation, recorded so succinctly and yet so eloquently - every fact, as it were, a concentrate of so much, telling so much to one who has the imagination to understand what is involved in each one of these items so briefly and concisely recorded in this proclamation. I say, one cannot fail to be impressed not only by the record of achievement, but almost as much by the tone of the proclamation itself, a tone of quiet strength and dignity, of realism and of resolution. There is no vain glorious boasting in this proclamation, no flamboyant propaganda either for domestic or foreign consumption.

This proclamation recounts with a justifiable measure of pride the political and economic gains of the last twelve months in the life of this new-born state - how many thousands of exiles were absorbed. It is amazing to reflect upon this fact. Two years ago there were some 650,000 Jews in Palestine; today there are nearly 1,100,000, two years later. The fact becomes even more impressive when you realize that in all the years of immigration and colonization from the beginning of the Zionist movement up to

1948, in all those years about 450,000 Jews entered the country. And in the two years since May 14, 1948, over 400,000 entered the country.

The proclamation records how the state of Israel finally succeeded in emptying the concentration camps of Europe, something which all the great nations of the world combined failed to accomplish. There was no room in the great world, the vast empty countries - Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South America, the United States - there was no room for those few hundred thousand victims of Hitler. Here and there a trickle of them was permitted to enter under terrific pressure and after much propaganda. In two years that little state of Israel, 6,000 square miles, admitted them all.

The proclamation records how other centers where Jews lived under persecution and menace, like Yemen in southern Arabia, have practically been liquidated by the state of Israel. The proclamation records how many new settlements were established, how many people were settled on the land, how many houses were built, how many schools and shops and factories. It points to the helpful measures which were taken to reduce the cost of living, expand the markets, to increase the productivity of labor, industry, to strengthen the defenses of the country surrounded, as it still is, by armies which have not demobilized.

The proclamation recalls the very gratifying fact that it was in this year, on May 11, 1949, that the state of Israel was admitted to the organization of the United Nations, the 59th member in the United Nations, and that the proud banner, the white and blue banner of the state of Israel, was raised along Lake Success and took its honored place among the emblems and banners of other sovereign and independent states of the world. Some 60 countries have now recognized the state of Israel, including three Moslem countries, and for the first time, says the proclamation, the voice of Israel was raised in the assembly of nations, in the concert of nations, speaking for Israel, speaking as we had every right to expect of the representatives of a people, which throughout the ages spoke in the strain of prophets and seers, speaking for peace, world peace, and international justice.

This is a record, you will agree with me, that any state ten times the size of the state of Israel and 100 times as old as this infant republic has every reason to be proud of. The political sagacity, statesmanship which piloted this ship of state through the broken and dangerous seas might well evoke our admiration, not to speak of the skill and the initiative and the courage and vision and sacrifice which informed the handling of the many enormously difficult and almost overwhelming economic problems which beset the new state.

One is moved to admiration by the realization that this small Jewish community, in order to make possible the ingathering of hundreds of thousands of fellow Jews, impoverished, victims of persecution and disaster, voluntarily submitted itself to a regimen of austerity, of self-denial, of heavy taxation, which it did not have to do, if it were looking out exclusively for itself and for its own interests. The citizens of Israel today have voluntarily reduced their standard of living. Twenty-six hundred calories a day are allowed an individual, less than was the British food ration after the war; four meatless days every week for all the inhabitants of the country.

A key to the understanding of this remarkable people, which is now re-building successfully the ancestral home and the state of Israel, may be found in this very proclamation which I read to you, in its frankness and forthright honesty which reflect the capacity of these people to appraise their situation realistically, not to delude themselves on any account. After recounting the achievements, you recall the proclamation said, "However, the road ahead is still long and hard."

"The road is still very long." They know that they are still surrounded by enemies, threatening enemies, that not a single peace treaty has as yet been signed with any of the neighboring Arab peoples. They hear the voices emanating from Cairo and Bagdad and Damascus and Beiruth and Amen which speak of a second round, of resumption of hostilities at the favorable moment to crush this new state of Israel and drive its people into the sea. They understand what was implied in the action which was taken

all too precipitously by the United Nations in August of last year to lift the embargo upon the shipment of arms. The Arab states are arming themselves now to the teeth, and the nation that's helping them to arm is Mr. Bevin's nation, Great Britain. On September 9th of last year Reuther quoted the Lebanese defense minister as saying that "Lebanon has recently received from England 5 to 10 training planes and another shipment is expected by the end of the month. The Middle East Broadcasting Station announced on October 6th, 'The Syrian Government is contacting British aircraft manufacturers in order to buy from them airplanes. The Syrian Government also intends to send to England Syrian pilots to learn to pilot the jet airplanes.' The New York Times correspondent in London wrote on November 15th, 'The Egyptian Delegate in England has ordered a big order of jet planes of the latest types. The aircraft will be purchased from the DeHaviland Company with the agreement of the British Government.'" One-third of the budget of Egypt for 1949-50, or 178 millions of dollars, will be spent by Egypt this year for armament.

The people of Israel understand what all this means. The Arab League has stirred itself into action again after the stunning defeat which it suffered two years ago. They realize that while many Jews have come to Israel, many more who are still subject to persecution in foreign lands have not yet found the haven of Israel. They are at the moment preparing for the incursion of a large Jewish immigration from Iraq, Iraq - that's ancient Babylon - Babylonia where our people lived for 2500 years - Babylonia which produced great Jewish academies, schools and the Talmud. Many Jews will have to leave Iraq within the next few months because of threatened annihilation. They're turning to Israel and this hard-pressed little country, economically and politically, is preparing to receive them. They are aware of the 90,000 Jews who are still living in Israel, in barracks and in tents and in camps, because they have not been able as yet to build proper homes for them. They state that their national economy is unstable. The volume of imports far exceeds exports. They face up to the fact that there is still much division among them, people having come from all parts of the

world with different attitudes, different backgrounds, different standards of living, different philosophies of life. And that little country today contains this amorphous, conglomerate of disparate peoples coming from all parts of the world which in many instances, lack that coherence and that discipline that a stable government requires. All this divisiveness which is, as the proclamation says, the fruits of dispersion and lack of independence. They are aware of their political insecurity, of their economic instability, of their inner conflict, but - and this is the seal and symbol of their invincibility - fully realizing all these factors in their situation, squarely facing up to them, they are yet able to conclude that they are "the toil of three pioneering generations was not in vain and we are privileged to witness the beginnings of deliverance. Let us rejoice in our festival of independence and let us gather our strength to realize fully and completely the vision of our deliverance". This is only the beginning of their deliverance.

May 14, 1948, was not the completion of deliverance; it was the beginning of deliverance.

The rabbis, who knew Jewish life so thoroughly and expressed it often so incisively, said: "Redemption will never come to this people of Israel little by little, step by step." That's how the redemption has come, and that is how it will continue until it is completed. A state may be destroyed in a day or in a year; it can never be built in a day or a year, nor can it ever be built without the birth pangs of building. Look back upon our own history here in the United States. Look back upon the eras of the Revolution which brought this blessed country into being and of the years which followed it. For years after the establishment of the United States of America, following the victorious revolution against Great Britain, the finances of the new republic were in a chaotic state, debts were left unpaid, industry and commerce were in a state of woeful depression, the monetary system was discredited, the country was flooded with worthless paper issued by the presses of several states, there was wide-spread unrest and even armed uprisings, such as Shay's Rebellion, and there was always the over-hanging threat and menace of renewed war with Great Britain, and which by the way did finally break out in 1812. And there was always the threat of foreign

intervention, and yet, they saw it through, these founding fathers of our republic, because they realized that these are the birth pangs of a new life, that without struggle, war, Valley Forge, without much suffering, without the pains of adjustment, no state ever comes into being.

And so the builders of the state of Israel have learned the lesson of patience, and so must we, who have helped them to build that state.

Our responsibility to the state of Israel did not end in May 1948. They faced the enemy, the tremendous odds of five invading armies. They faced that enemy at first almost without arms. They dared to do it because they believed and they were not deluded in their belief that behind them stood a great Jewish people possessed of vast reserves, prepared to help them right through to victory. And because of that, they fought, and fighting, they won. They are prepared to face their political problems of tomorrow and all their grave economic problems, prepared to see them through to victory. They have the ability, they have the skill, they have the manpower. They are amazingly gifted and talented and loyal and resilient people. They are prepared to face every difficulty provided that confidence remains with them and back of them there still stands a great Jewish people, particularly the Jews of America as their reserves to back them up until they are able to stand fully on their own feet.

I quote the rabbis again, and it is remarkable how in all such critical situations, one turns time and again to the ancient wisdom of our forefathers. The rabbis said:

"A man who starts out doing a meritorious deed cannot stop half way, and if he does, you tell him to finish it." What does it mean to undertake a mitzvah, to commence it. Why, ^{by} the very act of commencing it you create commitments, you start certain forces in operation. There are certain consequences which flow from the very initiation of an act which, if not seen through to its proper conclusion, will be diverted into channels of disaster.

This thing which the Jewish people undertook, the building of the state, is not the consequence of some whim, some fad. It's a nice thing to have a state and a flag.

The building of the state of Israel was the result of the tragic, desperate necessities of Jewish life; the desire to rebuild the national state began on the day when the Temple was destroyed 2,000 years ago.

And throughout the long, weary centuries the Jewish people hoped for that consummation, dreamt of it, prayed for it, and in our generation it became possible to translate that hope and that dream into concrete, political action, and we went before the nations of the world and said, "The Jewish state must be re-built. It is the only solution for the seemingly unsolvable and enduring tragic problem of Jewish homelessness throughout the world. Give us a chance," we said, "and we will build a state of which we will all be proud, which will be a contribution to the peace of the world." Finally, after much labor, great sacrifices, tremendous expenditure of energy on the part of myriads of our people everywhere all over the world, that permission was granted, and then our proud sons and daughters in Israel proceeded to translate that permission into a reality by fighting for it on the battle-field, by shedding their blood. With their blood they cemented the foundations of a new state two years ago. And now the state is in existence, beset, as the state itself announced, with so many grave and threatening problems of all kinds. What are we to say, then, to them? We have done our duty; we are through. Go on, you carry on by yourselves. Do you know what that would mean if once that thought went over to them, and I am sure that no Jew entertains the thought. It would just feed the intransigence of the Arabs. That's just the thing they're looking for, to leave that little state isolated in the world, without reserves, without backing, without support, economic or political. That would be their favorable moment for which they have been waiting to reopen the attack upon the state and to attempt to destroy it.

"When you begin a great and meritorious act of such historic proportions, you have to see it through." If I know the Jewish people, and I believe I do know them, they will see it through.

The tasks which face the little state in the future are three-fold, all soluble if we help them. First, their economy has to be supported, not merely by generous

contributions, such as come from a United Welfare Fund, but from private investment. Jews who are able can make a tremendous contribution to the stability of the state of Israel by investing in economic projects in the country which, in turn, will absorb new immigrants, which in turn will contribute to the stability of the economy of the country and to its prosperity. Secondly, the country must be protected politically against these possible reopening of hostilities by the stopping of the shipment of arms to the neighboring Arab countries. They do not need these arms. Nobody's threatening them, nobody. Certainly, the state of Israel is not threatening them. The state of Israel has been urging peace, courting peace. The state of Israel wants peace in order to continue with the work of construction, of upbuilding.

And here, the United States of America may be, if it so desires, tremendously helpful in bringing diplomatic pressure upon Mr. Bevin to cease the rearming of the Arabs which will, unless it is checked, which may inflame the whole Middle East. The other political problem facing the state is the status of Jerusalem which I am inclined to believe is nearer to a satisfactory solution today than it was a few weeks ago as a result of the new position taken by the Russian government which favored internationalization at the last assembly of the United States, but which a few days ago announced that it had changed its mind. Internationalization of Jerusalem would be a signal for war in that part of the world. It is impractical, unjust. The proper solution lies in establishing an international supervision over the holy places which is alone the concern of the great religions of the world, not to superimpose a foreign political international regime over secular cities and secular populations.

I should like to conclude with this word on the occasion of the second anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel. Whatever we have given to that state and whatever we have done to make it possible, it has already repaid us ten-fold as I always knew it would. I have already referred to the fact that it has emptied the camps of Europe. All the countries of the world failed to do it. All the millions that we poured out to bring it about failed to accomplish it. When the political

struggle began 7 years ago at the American Jewish Conference, I stated then that the immigrants, the refugees in the concentration camps of Europe will never be moved unless the Jewish Commonwealth was first established. No country would take them, and Palestine would not admit them under any foreign mandatory regime, only as the Jews become sovereign in Palestine and have control of the ports and the keys of immigration, will those camp be emptied. There were very practical people at the time who scoffed at this position. It seemed so extreme, so fantastic, so impractical. The practical people said, "Oh, forget about this political philosophy and program. Think only of refugees. Urge that 100,000 Jewish refugees be permitted to come into the country. That's practical, that you'll get. An independent state you will never get." And so, for years they spent their time and energy in urging America and urging Great Britain and other countries to permit 100,000 Jews to come into Palestine, and those 100,000 Jews never came into Palestine. But as soon as the Jewish state was established and the doors open, not only 100,000 Jews came into Palestine, but 400,000 Jews in two short years. Hundreds of thousands of more Jews will be coming in the next few years.

That little country of Palestine has, in other words, already repaid the Jews of the world for all their monetary investment into it by solving the greatest and gravest and most tragic problem in Jewish history. It emptied the hell-nests of Hitler in Europe and gave these hundreds of thousands of human beings a new home and a new hope. And it has done more than that, something which is far more precious than rubies, something which we can never repay the state of Israel. It has restored to Jewish life a sense of dignity, a pride and a confidence which it hasn't had for 2,000 years. I go from coast to coast, I visit Jews all over America. I visit them in other parts of the world. I know that a new spirit has come to dwell in the hearts and in the souls of Jews. Their shoulders have been straightened. A new look has come into the eyes of young Jews everywhere. The curse of the galut, the overhanging pall of homelessness, of being different, discriminated and different, marked as pariahs, outcasts -

that fact is vanishing from the consciousness of Jews. They are able to look their fellowmen straight in the face, man to man, citizen to citizen. Of equal status, of equal dignity. How many millions is that worth to the Jews of the world, to our children, to the generations of tomorrow? Can you calculate that in terms of dollars and cents altogether?

And one other thought by which this little state will repay us. I am confident that in a very short time, given peace, given the wherewithal to develop itself economically, that little country is going to become a radiant center of influence for civilization, for culture, for democracy, for freedom, for a new way of life to the entire Near East. And the Jewish people will again be performing one of the great historic purposes which time and again in the past it has served mankind, a force for progress, for emancipation, for freedom in the world. What the Jews are bringing to that Oriental corner of the earth, neglected through centuries, befouled by feudalism, by illiteracy, ravaged by poverty and disease - what the Jews are bringing to that part of the world in which tens of millions of human beings live, is a new way of life, modern, scientific and yet, informed with the ancient spirit of Jewish prophecy for justice, for the dignity of man, for the elevation of society. From the land of Judea there will begin to radiate these currents of influence, social, economic, spiritual, cultural, and the contiguous lands will become permeated with these ideas, and steadily through the years a revolution, a spiritual, cultural and political revolution, will take place in that part of the world.

Don't be deluded by the idea that because this little country is so small, it cannot do it. The great contributions to mankind were always made by little countries inhabited by great peoples. Like Judea, in ancient times; like Greece, in classical times; like Holland; like England - little countries whose people were possessed of certain qualities of greatness which they contributed to the sum total of civilization. When God wanted to reveal Himself and His law, he didn't choose the Alps or the Himalayas, or the Rockies; he chose little Sinai.

When God

wanted to speak to Moses, He didn't choose a stately pine, tall trees; he chose a bush, a shrub, and out of it came the fire of revelation, of inspiration.

Because Israel is destined to become - in fact, is becoming - this center of dynamic influence in that part of the world, it is repaying us 100-fold for all that we have done for it. Let us make sure that every succeeding anniversary will record increasingly satisfactory achievements, increasing greatness, not merely material greatness, but spiritual greatness in that country which we helped to build and of which we are enormously proud.

