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Significant breakthroughs in history, 1958.

Significant 'Breakthroughs' in History

by Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

THERE are certain achievements in science which are thereafter known as breakthroughs; supersonic speed was such a breakthrough; nuclear fission and the space satellite. In these and similar instances, man battered down barriers that had hemmed him in since the beginning of time. And each breakthrough opened up for man new and unexplored worlds of immeasurable possibilities. Each, as it were, was a new day of creation. Now, in human history too, there are such breakthroughs. Political, social and economic breakthroughs. The Renaissance was such a one. The American Revolution, the French Revolution, and that of the Soviet Union and its people, the Russian Revolution. With their occurrences in history, mankind began to move in radically new directions. And the world was never the same thereafter.

In Jewish history, likewise, there have transpired events of such critical and decisive character, that they, too, must be regarded as breakthroughs. The exodus from Egypt was such a breakthrough; the giving of the law at Sinai, together with the prophetic movement to which it gave rise, was such a breakthrough for the religious development of Israel, and of mankind for that matter. The return from the Babylonian captivity, the victory of the Maccabees, each of these momentous events inaugurated a new era and each opened windows upon new horizons for our people.

One of the most significant breakthroughs in Jewish history were the United Nations Resolution of November, 1947, and the Proclamation of the State of Israel in May, 1948. These events broke down the 2,000 year-old barrier of the Galut which had hemmed in our people and wedged them in helplessly. It opened a new age of freedom, of political and spiritual independence. It changed everything, including ourselves. We began to think differently and to act and to

speak differently. We found ourselves experiencing a complexion of new sensations which had been alien to our people for centuries. We discovered unsuspected reservoirs of energy and resources within ourselves, a capacity to undertake and execute projects which formerly we had been persuaded were beyond our powers.

All this happened to us following the breakthrough of ten years ago. These ten years have been tremendous years, glorious in dynamic plans and unprecedented deeds and achievements in valorous defense. No decade in Jewish history is quite comparable to it. So many fears have been proved groundless. So many hopes have been speeded. So many myths have been exploded.

THESE ten years have been years of testing. The world and we ourselves waited to see whether the Jewish people possessed the stamina, the perseverance the sagacity, the sacrificial loyalty requisite for the building of the nation. And through ten years, and with mounting wonder and admiration, the world and we ourselves witnessed an unfolding drama of national ingathering and construction and courage and vigor and valor, such as mankind has seldom, if ever, witnessed. And during these ten years Israel has made good in a breathtaking way, not in perfection, but in remarkable progress with daring spirit of enterprise. Israel has made good in shop and field and land and sea and air, in city and town and village, in swamp and wilderness, in schools and higher centers of learning and research, in social service, in a revived language and culture. Israel has made good on the battlefield to the amazement of friends and the confounding of enemies.

But not only they in Israel have not been found wanting, but the Jews of the Diaspora also have not been found wanting. Their loyalty has been steadfast, and the support of the Jews of the far-flung Diaspora has proved unflinching. And whatever pattern of nobility history may come to confer upon this generation of Jews, for their rare dedication to a

struggle, will be shared, I am persuaded, equally by our valiant people within the borders of Israel and by their faithful brothers and sisters, co-workers beyond the borders.

WHAT have these last ten years given us? What have these last ten years given our people? Not only a national home, not only the status of a free and sovereign nation, not only a sanctuary of redeemed life and reborn hope for hundreds of thousands of our brethren, refugees for whom the rest of the great wide world had no place. Not only an emergent new civilization, a rare blending of the old and new, not only a land risen from the ruins and the waste of the ravages of centuries. One beholds at every turn the strength of youth and the eyes of youth and the hopes of youth. But these last ten years have restored to our people its lost pride, the confidence which the cruel centuries almost succeeded in destroying. The last ten years saved us from fatal despair after the Nazi horrors which rent, bent down and caused the spirit of our people almost to languish unto death. These last ten years have held us and made us whole again. They have restored to us the sense of national worth and national mission. And history has led us back after many daring and desperate detours to the royal highway of our national destiny.

Is our work done after these ten magnificent, exciting, heroic years? Our work will not be done until the ingathering is completed, until the national economy of Israel is stabilized, until it has its borders made secure and its enemies cease from threatening and harassing.

ISRAEL is not opposed to Arab unity, any more than the people of Israel were ever opposed to the legitimate national aspirations of the Arab people. Israel would like to cooperate with these enterprises which, combining the technical know-how and the dedicated services of the people of Israel, with the vast capacities, many of these unexplored, of the Arab peoples of the Middle East, may convert that poor area of the world into

one of the great centers of progress and development.

Israel sees itself ultimately as a partner in a companionship of efforts on the part of all peoples and governments in that area. I recall that even in ancient days, when Israel faced a hostile Egypt and often a hostile Syria — an Egypt which had enslaved our people for 400 years, and a Syria which destroyed the Kingdom of Israel in 722 — nevertheless the prophets in Israel in those days had the larger vision of the ultimate reconciliation. And so the flaming words of the prophet Isaiah pronounced: "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Syria, even a blessing in the midst of the land whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless, saying, blessed be Egypt, my people, and Syria by the work of my hands and Israel by inheritance."

This is the spirit of Israel all throughout the ages. It was Israel who gave to mankind the vision of all peoples beating their swords into plowshares and their knives into pruning hooks, and not going to war any more, all of them being guided by the God of Justice and the Brotherhood of Peace.

BUT until that time of acceptance and reconciliation, until such time as statesmen, instead of ambitious politicians, shall arise among the Arab peoples in the Middle East — politicians who will be thinking of how to benefit their peoples, not how to reestablish military empires and dictatorships — until that time comes, Israel must be made secure. The best way to make Israel secure is to give her the economic weapons with which she can develop her national life.

This I take as the meaning of the campaign for Israel Bonds. There are all kinds of bonds. There are bonds of servitude, there are involuntary bonds which enshackle people. Israel Bonds are bonds of unity. They represent voluntary commitments on our part to share the common tasks with our brothers and sisters in Israel and to help them build for strength and security. These are Bonds of Freedom. These are Bonds of victory.

Most Significant Breakthrough in Modern Jewish History Happened Ten Years Ago

There are certain achievements in science which come to be known as breakthroughs. Super-sonic speed was such a breakthrough. So were unclear fission and the space satellite. In these and similar instances, man battered down barriers which had hemmed him since the beginning of time. And each breakthrough opened up for man new and un-



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In Jewish history, likewise there have transpired events of such critical and decisive character, that they, too, must be regarded as breakthroughs. The Exodus from Egypt was such a breakthrough. The giving of the Law at Sinai, and the prophetic movement to which it gave rise, was such a breakthrough for the religious development of Israel. And of mankind generally. The return from the Babylonian captivity, the victory of the Maccabees—each one of these momentous events inaugurated a new era

The Last Ten Years Have Not Only Given Jews the Status of A Free and Sovereign Nation. But Also Restored Lost Pride and Confidence. By DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

and each opened windows upon new horizons for our people.

Most Significant Breakthrough

In my judgment, two of the most significant breakthroughs in Jewish history were the United Nations Resolution of November 1947, and the Proclamation of the State of Israel in May, 1948. These events broke down the 2,000 year-old barrier of the Galut which had hemmed in our people and wedged them in helplessly. It opened a new age of freedom, of political and spiritual independence. It changed everything, including ourselves. We began to think differently and to act and to speak differently. We found ourselves experiencing a complex of new sensations which had been alien to our people for centuries. We discovered unsuspected reservoirs of energy and resources within ourselves, a capacity to undertake and execute projects which formerly we had been persuaded were beyond our powers.

Successful revolutions are nearly always the "open sesame" to great and daring new enterprises. They nearly always bring to the front large numbers of heretofore unknown or underestimated people, who materialize suddenly, and suddenly assume a vital role in the prosecution of great, new enterprises. Where there were only few, mighty hosts now loom up.

Years of Testing

All this happened to us following the breakthrough of ten years ago. These ten years have been tremendous years, glorious in dynamic planning, in unprecedented deeds and achievements, in valorous defense. No decade in Jewish history is quite comparable to it. So many fears have been proved groundless. So many hopes have been exceeded. So many myths have been exploded.

These ten years were years of testing. The world and we ourselves waited to see whether the Jewish people possessed the stamina, the perseverance, the

sagacity, the sacrificial loyalty which are requisite for the building of a State. And through ten years, and with mounting wonder and admiration, the world and we ourselves witnessed an unfolding drama of national ingathering and construction, of courage, vigor and valor, such as mankind had seldom, if ever, witnessed. During these ten years Israel has made good in a breathtaking way, not in the perfection of objectives, but in *elan*, in swift progress, and in the daring spirit of its enterprises. Israel has made good in shop and field, on land, sea and air, in city, town and village, in swamp and wilderness, in schools and centers of higher learning and research, in social services, in a revived language and culture. Israel has made good on the battlefield—to the amazement of friends and the confounding of enemies.

"Matching the Hour"

Ten years ago, following the great Resolution of the United Nations, I addressed a meeting in the City of New York, given as a sort of testimonial to me before I departed for a visit to Israel. In that address I said:

"Our builders in Palestine will have much to endure and much to overcome, but they will assuredly match their hour. They have still to discover their political eyes. They are children of the crucible. They have come from the four corners of the earth and from all parts of the Galut, and the Galut leaves its mark on everyone. They hail from all cultural zones and from all political backgrounds. They represent most diverse personal experiences, and they must all be fused into an organic whole. They must learn unity in diversity, patience in stress, and the knack of subduing the voices of the partisan, the doctrinaire and the fanatic in the joyous tumult of building.

"Our building," I said then, "will live in a land which is not a fortress built by nature for herself against infection and the hand of war, as Shakespeare sang of England. It is a very open land whose borders are difficult to defend, and whose security must rest on the stout hearts, the political wisdom and the national discipline of its people. What they have gained through courage they will have to keep with prudence. But the spirit, the will and the capacity are there, and they will not be found wanting."

"Not Found Wanting"

Today, ten years later, I am proud to repeat that last statement—"They will not be found wanting"—for they have not been

and sisters, co-workers beyond the borders.

What have these last ten years given our people? Not only a national home, not only the status of a free sovereign nation, not only a sanctuary of redeemed life and hope for hundreds of thousands of our brethren, refugees for whom the rest of the whole, great wide world had no place. Not only an emergent new civilization, a rare blending of the old and new, not only a land risen from the ruins, the waste and the ravages of centuries where one beholds at every turn the strength of youth, the eyes of youth and the hopes of youth. But these last ten years have also restored to our people its lost pride, the confidence which the cruel centuries almost succeeded in destroying. The last ten years saved us from fatal despair after the Nazi horrors which caused the spirit of our people to languish, almost unto death. These last ten years have helped us and made us whole again. They have restored to us the sense of national worth and national mission. History has led us back after many dangerous and desperate detours to the royal highway of our national destiny.

Work Not Done

Is our work done after these ten magnificent, exciting Jewish years? Our work will not be done until the ingathering is completed, until the national economy of Israel is stabilized, until its borders are made secure and its enemies cease from threatening and harassment.

Many of the major problems of ten years ago remain unsolved. The Palestine war is not ended. Only a troubled armistice exists, but no peace. The presence of United Nations' forces on the borders is proof, if proof were needed, that no peace exists. Blockades and boycotts continue in force against Israel. Israel's security is constantly threatened by the vast stores of arms which the Arab nations are acquiring, mostly, though not exclusively, from Soviet sources, by the unabated war-mongering Arab propaganda and by the transparent, hostile objectives behind the recent federalizing of Arab States. Israel has been compelled by circumstances to divert much of its limited income from social construction to defense.

Arab Refugee Problem

The Arab refugee problem has not been solved. More consideration has been given by the West to Arab governments and their military purposes than to Arab peoples and their dire human needs. Israel has been willing, in

spite of its own pressing refugee problem, to make a major contribution to the solution of the Arab problem which was created, not by Israel, but by the belligerency of the Arab governments and their military defiance of the United Nations' Resolution. Israel has been waiting long for a peace conference, which the Arab governments have consistently spurned, where the subject of the refugees could be discussed and concrete proposals agreed upon, or for the initiative on the part of governments, friendly both to the Arabs and the Israeli, who are prepared to give priority to the human factors involved over their own political maneuvering.

These problems mean one thing—among others. Our work is not done! The second decade will clamor for their solution. Until they are solved those who initiated the effort of building a State are committed to see it through. And the God of our Fathers Who looked with favor upon this generation of pioneers and builders will, we prayerfully hope, prosper our hands in the work which lies ahead and the hands of those who will follow us.