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Israel's 13th anniversary, 1961.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABRA HILLEL SILVER ON THE OCCASION OF
THE THIRTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

The first ~~thirteen~~ ^{fourteen} years in the life of a state are, in a sense, a prologue.

In classic drama, the prologue served to acquaint the audience with the dramatic situation of the play and to forecast in broad outline what was to follow.

In the prologue years of its existence, the State of Israel has clearly indicated the basic design of its national life and the unfolding lines of its future development.

Israel intends to build a free, open and democratic society. It has linked its political destiny with that of the free peoples of the earth.

Israel intends to build a progressive society. Reverent of the past, it will move resolutely into the future. It will foster education, science, research and the institutions which advance the frontiers of the human mind.

Israel intends to build a just society, free from exploitation, poverty and discrimination, wherein the rights and dignity of man will be safe-guarded.

Israel intends to become a helpful member of the international community and to share with the less developed nations its experience and its knowledge.

Israel intends to be a peaceful society, seeking peace and pursuing it. In the past ~~thirteen~~ ¹⁵ years, Israel has announced, by its faithful allegiance to the free world, the development of its educational system and its institutions of higher learning, its advanced social legislation, the aid which it has extended to less developed nations of Africa and Asia, and the maintenance of peace, in the face of boycott, blockade and the menacing contrivances of its un-recalled neighbors, the ground-tone of its chosen way of life, its fundamental purposes and dominant interests as a nation. All this is in complete accord with the ancient

and noble traditions of our people. This is what makes us rejoice today as Israel completes its thirteen prologue years of testing and probation, even more than its extraordinary material progress.

Every one who has had a hand in helping to bring Israel into being and in assisting in its growth -- as you have assisted through the purchase of Bonds for Israel and in other ways -- may feel proud and deeply gratified.

What now of the future?

It would be nice if we could "dip into the future and see the visions of the world and all the wonders that would be", but we cannot do it. No one can guarantee the future of a people, or of the human race, but God Himself, and He has evidently chosen to keep us guessing. He seems to have said to us, though not in so many words, keep working and have faith. Those in the past who had faith and worked in despite of all uncertainty and discouragement, won through. The very success of our movement and the notable achievements in Israel are supreme triumphs of faith; for everything pointed to certain failure and defeat.

The days to come will make even greater demands upon our faith and perseverance than ever before. Israel will not be able to escape the political tensions and pressures of the world of which it is a part. Grave, unsolved problems -- internal and external -- still remain. Danger lurks upon its borders. The timid among us and those who are not inured to the hard pull and the long stretch will fall away. The brave of heart, those who have faith in Israel, in Israel's destiny, in themselves and in the endless resources of the human spirit, will carry on, and will score rewarding victories in the exciting days which lie ahead. Faith will be the bridge which will carry us over.

I note that even in this thirteenth year of Israel's existence, there are still some Jews who are concerned about the political relationship between the State of Israel and Jews who live in other lands.

There is, for example, an organization of American Jews, called the American Jewish Committee, which has a long and honorable record of service in defense of Jewish rights here and abroad. While originally it was tardy in assisting the Zionist movement, and for a time actually set its face against it, it did join in the final hour of decision the overwhelming majority of American Jews who favored the re-establishment of the Jewish State, and it has been loyally cooperative ever since. From time to time, however, it finds itself troubled in mind and wants to be re-assured. It wants to make certain about this thing called dual loyalty. It wants to make sure that the government of Israel will not interfere in the affairs of American Jews. So that on occasions, and on its own, and without consulting other representative Jewish organizations, it will elicit formal reassurances from the Prime Minister of Israel. The latter, who has a kind word to say to everybody, except to Zionists, gladly gives them what they want to know. I personally believe that this exchange of query and response is quite pointless. Dual allegiance was never a fact in Jewish experience. It exists only in the arsenal of the anti-Semite and in the minds of the frightened and insecure Jew. Jews have always been loyal citizens in the lands of their adoption, just as the English, French or Italians, who found new homes in other countries.

It should be clear to every right-thinking man that no one in Israel can commit the Jews of America any more than the Jews in America can dictate to the State of Israel. If certain American Jews feel insecure in their citizenship, this insecurity existed long before the establishment of the State of Israel, which, by common consent, has rather raised the status of the Jews in the eyes of the American people. The only way Israel can ever embarrass the Jews of the United States or of the world is by not living up to its promise of a free and just society.

The only way the Jews of the world can embarrass Israel is by with-holding from the pioneers the tools which they require to build the State. It is in this sense, and in this sense only, that our fortunes comprehend each other. Only good-will, voluntary cooperation, trust and discretion can serve as a permanent two-way bridge between Israel and the diaspora. Whatever obligations the Jews of the world assume towards Israel are self-imposed. They are the obligations of historic kinship, of members of a community pledged to mutual assistance. The Jews of the world cannot remain mere neutral spectators to the heroic drama of Israel reborn.

Apart from the inveterate opposition to the State of Israel on the part of Arab governments -- which in time may be attenuated -- there are still some Jews and some non-Jews who are very unhappy about its existence. Professor Arnold Toynbee, the historian, is a case in point. On the strength of a vast accumulation of historic inaccuracies, he now presumes to pass final judgments on all world events, past and present, and has assumed the role of a prophet to the nations. Israel and Zionism have become his particular burden and parable. Zionism and anti-Semitism are, in his view, expressions of an identical point of view. The watchword of anti-Semitism is "Back to the medieval ghetto". Zionism simply seeks to gather all the far-flung ghettos in the world into one single consolidated ghetto in Israel.

You will recall that this same Professor declared not long ago that Judaism survived through the centuries "only as a fossil", and that the Jews were among the relics of the Syriac civilization. He has since reconsidered his views about Judaism. Judaism is now a unique and quite exalted religion which, if it could only be separated from the Jews, would have a great future in the world. Professor Toynbee is now all out for Judaism but without Jews!

The American Council for Judaism, whose fair-haired boy Professor Toynbee has become, goes him one better. Judging by a recent article in the Council's publication, "The Jewish Newsletter", the Council wants neither Jews nor Judaism.

Its editor writes: "While Jewish nationalism in the Diaspora is certainly bound to disappear in the Western world, particularly in the United States, it is not at all certain that American Jews will turn to Jewish religion in any form to take the place of nationalism. Modern Judaism has nothing to offer to the Christian or Jewish world. There is more prophetic Judaism in Quakerism, Unitarianism and other liberal Protestant or even Catholic groups than in the whole of modern Judaism, including the Reform movement. As for modern Jews, if they hunger and thirst for religion, it is certainly not for Jewish tribalism and its ideological front, known as Judaism."

We have always suspected that the American Council for Judaism hates not only Zionism -- which it so bitterly and so meanly fought -- but Jews and Judaism as well. The name of the organization is a camouflage for self-hate, apostasy and betrayal.

But what is in the minds of these deceived prophets and Jewish escapiats shall never come to pass. Others before them had tried, by sword or pen, to expirpate Jew or Judaism, or both. Because of them, Israel has suffered much, but it has nevertheless survived. Israel is not abdicating as a people in order to serve as pilot or test-tube for some faceless international amalgam such as Professor Toynbee dreams of. We suggest that the Professor first persuade Great Britain, his own native "ghetto" homeland, to take on the role of pioneer. Israel can afford to wait and see what the great nations of the world intend to do about his interesting proposal. The Jewish people intends to live and not die for Judaism.

Israel has re-built now for the third time its national home which had been twice destroyed. This should give the historian some clue to the

character of this unique people, the creator and protagonist through the ages of a unique faith, both of whom survived together all the wars and weathers of the centuries. Loyal Jews will do their utmost in the days to come to strengthen and support the State of Israel. They will also work for a vital and dynamic Judaism every-where. They will make their contribution to mankind in the future as their forefathers did in the past by remaining true to themselves and their heritage.

We salute Israel in joy and hope on this thirteenth anniversary. May the Guardian of Israel prosper it in the years to come. "May Israel dwell in safety in a land of grain and wine. Happy are you, O Israel! who is like you, a people saved by the Lord".

