

57th annual Hadassah in Atlantic City
September 16, 1951

ADDRESS OF HIS EXCELLENCY, MOSHE SHARETT,
FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

"ISRAEL AND WORLD PEACE"

Mrs. Epstein, Mrs. Halprin, Senator Humphrey, ladies, and last though
least, gentlemen:

I regard it as a great distinction, a distinction which I find difficult
to match by performance, to be invited to take part in this great annual
event in AmericanZionist life.

It was quite comforting and refreshing to hear a couple of minutes
ago from your chairman that women liked women. (laughter) I would very
humbly claim the virtue of truth for the supplementary statement that
sometimes men, too, like women. (laughter)

But quite frankly, you can have too much of a good thing (laughter)
and I must confess to the feeling of awe at the sight of this huge and
so overwhelmingly feminine audience.

Before I proceed to say what I intended to say tonight, I should
like to express my very deep satisfaction at having made under your
auspices the personal acquaintance of a distinguished American, an
outstanding leader of American liberal opinion, Senator Humphrey. (applause)

Mrs. Epstein has already paid a tribute to him for the noble
assistance which he has lent to the application of the State of Israel
for a Grant-in-aid from the American Government. All I would add is
that Israel hopes by concrete achievement to show itself worthy of the
sympathy and support of such men of good will, of such noble Americans,
of such champions of justice and fair play in international relations
as Senator Humphrey. (applause)

As I stand here before you, my mind goes back to the last occasion
on which I had the privilege to address an annual convention of the Hadassah.
It was in the city, and I believe in this very hall, in the year 1947, in
those momentous days when our fate hung in the balance between fear and
hope. We did not dare at the time to prophesy with confidence the triumphant
outcome of the first great diplomatic struggle that the Jewish people waged
on the international arena. But even though some of us felt certain of the
result, the immediate aftermath of the international decision was darkly
alarming at the time. Both the fear and the hope prove true until the

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hope finally triumphed.

Four years have passed and I am not here to render account of what has been accomplished, of the difficulties that have been overcome and of those that are still facing us. Perhaps I will say only a few words about that particular sector of our battlefield which it is my privilege and responsibility to watch over.

The central fact which we have to face is that the difficulties and dangers on the external front are by no means over. Only a few days ago we were invited to the so-called Paris Conference. I say "so-called" not in order to disparage or minimize the importance of the occasion. I say it merely because I fear that the term "conference" in this particular case is a misnomer. There are certainly going to be discussions in Paris; ^{but} no conference will come to be as long as the other side persists in its obstinate, vindictive refusal to sit down with us and discuss peace.

It is a cornerstone of our foreign policy to cooperate with the United Nations. We are particularly anxious to leave no avenue unexplored in the quest for peace in the Middle East under United Nations auspices. For these reasons Israel has responded to the call. But it takes two to make peace. The crux of the matter remains whether the fact of our existence will once and for all be formally and irrevocably accepted by our immediate environment in the same manner in which it has been accepted by the rest of the civilized world.

The question is also whether we shall be accepted as we are, in terms of both area and population. It is to be assumed that the Arab states will try to achieve through the Paris parleys what they failed to gain by brute force. This being so, the question which is uppermost in our minds is whether the powers which constitute the commission - foremost among them the United States - will sponsor an attempt to penalize Israel for her survival; that is, whether they will try to wring from Israel a series of one-sided concessions which in their total effect may prove far-reachingly harmful or even destructive.

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Let me make it clear that Israel has not achieved her independence by the sacrifice of blood and treasure only to see it impaired or maybe even crippled by a political settlement. (applause) We have always acknowledged our liabilities and the contribution that we are in a position to make towards the attainment of stability and peace in the Middle East in which we are so vitally concerned both as a country pursuing its own national interests and as a member of the community of nations.

Thus we have always admitted our obligation to pay compensation for abandoned Arab lands. That admission indicates the direction in which an advance can be made towards the solution of the Arab refugee problem. On the other hand, an artificial restoration of status quo ante bellum, that is to say, an attempt to repatriate masses of Arab refugees, is a course bound to end in disaster.

There is a massive record of support for Israel by the United States. As we look back over the past four years, we see the highlights of our progress formed by acts of state and measures of assistance on the part of the American government. Only recently, we have signed a comprehensive agreement, the exact title of which is Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, with the United States. We regard this as a most important instrument in that it cements still further the friendship which unites our country with yours.

The question of a direct grant from the United States Treasury to Israel is now in the final stages of discussion and, we hope, approval by Congress. When approved, the grant will forge a new link of solidarity between the two countries. We are fully aware of the conflicting considerations that have accompanied the progress of this grant, yet we very earnestly believe that American friendship to Israel by no means entails American enmity to the Arab world. In the context of peace between Israel and her neighbors triangular harmony can be ensured. But the road to a constructive peace is not always identical with the line of lesser resistance, I should rather say the line of presumed lesser resistance, taken to appease the many at the expense of the few. The stakes are not divided in exact proportion to numbers.

It is a question what is and what is not a matter of life and death for either party. Taking all aspects into account, we presume to think that the government of the United States may do worse in the Middle East than continue to invest good will and material resources in the development of Israel to which democracy and democratic procedures are the very breath of existence. (Applause)

I have spoken of difficulties which Israel has to face on the external front. But our life generally is by no means a simple one. I remember one day I stood in front of a poster in Jerusalem announcing a play. It was a translation from the Yiddish and the title was "It Is Hard To Be A Jew". Two youngsters passed by, going home from school, and the words caught their eyes. As they stopped and read the title they looked at each other in sheer amazement and repeated the phrase "hard to be a Jew". They just could not make it out - here they were Jewish boys all right, yet they were conscious of no difficulty involved.

Well, my friends, some of us know better. The difficulty is part of our destiny. The problems are by no means insoluble, but they are complex. It is all because we are so different from others.

Let us not hesitate to state that simple historic truth. Let us not shirk its consequences. Our history is different from the history of other peoples. We are a unique case in the annals of the world. As a people, we have normalized our position to a great extent through the establishment of the State of Israel but that process of normalization has created its own new problems and given rise to new complexities. Again, these are by no means unharmonizable but they are thought-provoking; they call for adjustments; their solution entails a conscious effort.

I always speak with great diffidence before an audience of American Jews about problems of American Jewish life. I am not one of you; I study and observe you from afar, and I may be wrong in my impressions and conclusions. But it seems to me that the emergence of the independent State of Israel has not merely given you a tremendous satisfaction as Jews but has done something to normalize your position as Americans. (applause) And I would say in what sense.

Just as the case of the Jewish people in world history is unique, so is the genesis and destiny of the United States unique, first and foremost as far as its racial composition is concerned. Here is a nation which came to be as a result of the convergence upon this great continent of streams of people from many lands, practically from all the lands of the old world. They have all merged together to form the free American nation, the great American democracy.

Yet past memories die hard. And there is no reason why they should die so easily and quickly, nor is there any virtue in their dying at all. Most Americans are fully aware of the stock from which they originally sprang; they remember their origin and are proud of it; as occasions arise, they bear witness to it, sometimes in a fairly spectacular manner.

I saw in the streets of New York processions of American Poles, mostly born in this country, some second and third generation, yet carrying Polish banners, wearing Polish costumes, proud of their national tradition. I saw processions of Irish. Last year I attended a memorial service in New York for the late King of Sweden. The huge cathedral was filled to capacity with American Swedes. There was hardly any other American present but those of Swedish origin. These were all Americans, they had no conception of ever going back to Sweden, yet they felt united with their former mother country and paid proud tribute to the memory of one who had not been their king at all but one who had been king of the country to which their ancestors once belonged. To them this apparent dualism created no problem at all. On the contrary, it provided a healthy substructure to their proud American consciousness.

Now, it is this substructure, so normal in the case of most other Americans, that the American Jews had lacked until the State of Israel was established. Prior to that there was a fundamental difference between them and other elements of the American population, which in a subtle way implied inferiority for the Jew. Every average American, whose ancestors came from Britain or Ireland or Italy or Germany or Poland or any of the Scandinavian countries, could look at the map and say: that is the nation of which I am the offspring; it is a proud and free nation, a member of the family of mankind, with a culture of its own; it may temporarily come to grief but it will re-emerge and rehabilitate itself; I need not be ashamed of my origin; I am proud of being an American, but I am also proud of my ancestry, to which a nation that is alive today bears testimony.

That elementary feeling of an average American was denied to the American Jew. He could only derive some vicarious satisfaction from the fact that once upon a time, in remote antiquity, his people was free and creative, but today, consciously or otherwise he had to accept the inferiority of his position as compared with his fellow Americans. It is that anomaly that has now been removed by the emergence of Israel. The American Jew need no longer invoke ancient history to prove his claim to complete equality as regards his national origin. The nation to which his ancestors had belonged was now re-established in the full dignity of statehood and was showing itself capable of a reasonable mastery of the art of statecraft and of military valour on a footing of equality with all contemporary independent states.

But the issue has by no means ~~been~~ ^{been} thereby completely met. Fate has decreed a further complexity. On the one hand we were perfectly entitled to equalise our status to that of others, both by re-establishing the independent state of Israel and by being able, in the countries of our dispersion, to point to the existence of a Jewish State as a source of pride. On the other hand, we cannot and need not give up something in which we fundamentally differ from others. For let us admit the plain truth that there is no comparison between the attachment and devotion of a Jew - be he an American or a British or a French Jew - to the eternal values of Judaism, to the interests of Jews in other countries, and now to the State of Israel - and the kind of feeling that an American Irishman may have for Eire or a Scandinavian American for Sweden or Norway. The Jewish connection is something far more compelling and vital. This special trait is part of Jewish destiny. Let us face this basic fact. It is a perfectly legitimate fact. It is an organic element of history and the current world situation. It is not that we claim any superiority or special privilege. All peoples differ in some respect from one another. So do we, from all. Our case is unique. There is nothing here to hide or be ashamed of. It is our birthright. It does make our spiritual existence more complex, but the complexity is inescapable and must be accepted by the enlightened world. Nor is there here the root of any tragic or insoluble conflict. On the contrary, in a free and peaceful world this characteristic of Jewish life can become an element of international harmony. It is for this reason that Jews everywhere, as Jews, must be so vitally concerned in the preservation and restoration of peace and freedom.

A synthetic approach to our problem opens vistas for a harmonious integration of the interests involved. Take the relationship between Israel and the United States. It is of most vital importance for Israel to enlist and maintain the friendship and support of your great democracy. It is to this country that we look for guidance in our pioneering endeavor and for assistance in the solution of the complex economic and financial problems with which we are faced. In return, we offer it our friendship in which your country must be interested for its own sake.

Where is the guarantee that we shall succeed in our efforts to maintain the sympathy of the United States? On the other hand, how can the United States be certain that we shall always remain its friends? It is true that we are fostering the same kind of democracy to which the United States is dedicated. But one might argue that political orientations come and go and possess no absolute permanency. Is there in this case an organic guarantee of abiding friendship?

I think that the presence in America of five million Jews, the responsibility which Israel feels toward them on the one hand and their deep attachment to Israel on the other hand do provide such an ultimate assurance. As long as the bond between Israel and American Jewry persists -- for all the differences which may arise from time to time on this or that political decision or course of policy between the government of Israel and the government of the United States -- there can never be a rupture between the two countries because Israel will never turn its back on American Jewry and because, so we believe, American Jewry will never turn its back on Israel. (Applause)

Just as the loyalty of Israel to American Jews is imposing moral and political obligations on Israel so the attachment of American Jewry to Israel creates a stake for America in our country. In so far as Israel is of any importance to the United States -- far be it from me to exaggerate this importance, but, on the other hand, let us not minimize it, for we occupy a vital corner in a vital area -- the shape and form of our policy can by no means be a matter of indifference to the American government. So inasmuch as our position is of, let us assume, very limited but nonetheless tangible interest to the United States government, it cannot but regard the attachment of American Jewry to Israel as an asset of American policy. Conversely, inasmuch as the friendship of the United States is a cornerstone of Israel's foreign policy, the full-fledged citizenship of American Jews and their unswerving loyalty to their country and government become an inestimable asset of Israel's future.

This relationship, operating reciprocally in both directions, is again something unique in the world tissue of inter-state relations. In a sense, it places ~~both the~~

both the United States and Israel vis-à-vis each other beyond competition. For no country in the Near East can ever attain such intimacy of connection with the United States as is enjoyed by Israel by virtue of its closeness to American Jewry. On the other hand no other great power can today achieve the same place in the life of Israel as is occupied by the United States as a result of the deep and growing interest taken by the Jews of America in Israel's fortunes. This position is a noble challenge to the other major world power under whose rule, too, masses of Jews live. Yet that power finds itself precluded from entering the competition by its own internal régime which allows no freedom for self-expression for contact with the outside world.

Needless to say, that attachment of the Jews resident in other countries for Israel has not been deliberately invented to serve as a tool of a certain political orientation. It exists for its own sake, having its roots in Jewish history and in contemporary Jewish consciousness. It springs from the depth of the people's soul. That is its inherent strength and the guarantee of its indestructibility. It is because political solidarity in this case is a mere by-product of an organic unity that the political solidarity is so enduring. Were it not based on organic unity it would have remained a matter of temporary orientation and might not have withstood the impact of revolutionary changes liable to occur in the present changing world. But because the consciousness of Jewish unity and the bond between the people and its birthplace are something lasting, nay eternal, therefore whatever is built on that basis acquires the quality of permanency. (Applause)

I invite you also to face the fact that the attachment of Jews to Israel, which is the central value in world Jewish life of this generation, even in America, can go beyond its usual forms of interest, sympathy, concern, help, visits, or sharing in such cultural benefits as may already be derived from the creative efforts of Israel.

It may lead occasionally to a complete identification with the State of Israel in migration and settlement. Why should it not? Not because of fear for the future, nor because of any disability -- perish the thought. I know of no more vital Jewish world interest than that American Jewry should continue free, prosperous and secure. I know of no more pernicious stupidity than the attempt to conjure up sinister visions to the contrary.

If I were to epitomize contemporary Jewish history in one sentence, I would say

that it consists of one catastrophe and two miracles. The catastrophe is that which befell European Jewry. The two miracles are, first, ^{what} ~~that~~ the Jewish people under the banner of the Zionist movement managed to accomplish in Palestine in the inter-war period, that something which served as a basis for statehood and the bulwark of our defence when we fought against overwhelming odds; secondly, the fact that at the crucial stage of our history there was found in America a Jewish community, numerous, prosperous, and free, able to throw its political weight into the scales of the international decision and to contribute a part of its wealth to the struggle for Israel's survival. (Applause)

If that second miracle has been of such decisive importance to us in our struggle in the past, why should we assume that we can dispense with it in the future? It is the very basis of the Jewish future, it is the very basis of further development and progress for Israel that American should remain a free country and that the Jewish community of America should continue to enjoy its prosperity and freedom. (Applause)

So not out of fear, not because of any persecution or discrimination, but from the fullness of the Jewish heart, from the purity and nobility of the urge to become personally associated with the greatest romance of Jewish history, with the consummation of the people's age-old ideal, with the miraculous process of the twin rebirth of the country and the people, would it not be legitimate for some Jews, young or not so young, to become imbued with the ideal of going over and settling and making Israel their real, physical home?

I am not here to conduct propaganda for Aliyah, though in this era of unselective mass immigration from backward countries you know only too well how much we need select manpower, and, let me add, womanpower; how short we are getting of doctors, nurses, engineers, technicians, every conceivable type of professional talent, of well educated people generally.

But I am not now approaching the problem from the viewpoint of Israel's needs. I am trying to view it from the angle of your own psychology.

Why should it appear so odd and inconceivable if Jews in a free country freely chose to lead a fully Jewish life; if boys and girls in your own midst get caught by the spirit of that sublime adventure of the creation of a new Jewish society and are carried away by pioneering idealism; if they go out not in order to help and guide others but for direct participation, to become associated in the basic processes of the creation of a new society from its very foundations upwards? If this is a noble endeavor, why should that nobility be denied entirely to American Jews? (Applause)

If this is a revelation of the spirit of Jewish creativeness, why should American Jews be alone in excluding themselves from it?

This is no propaganda. This is no prompting, no urging to go. This is merely putting forward the claim of legitimacy for the going on behalf of those who choose to go--its legitimacy in terms of both Jewish life and American democracy.

Aliyah is of course the most far-reaching form of association, entailing physical transplantation as well as social metamorphosis, and what is perhaps most difficult of all, the gradual dissolution of the distinctive American individuality in the melting pot of Israel.

But short of that ~~extreme~~ ^{radical} step, there is a very wide gamut of phases of association and attachment embracing various aspects of economic, political and cultural activity which as time goes on and Israel realizes the prospects that, may I say, we all, you and we, hold in store for it, while throughout the diaspora the urge to remain Jewish does not abate, will continue to grow and develop, drawing American Jewry and Israel ever closer together.

These varied attachments create problems of their own. The problems are internally Jewish. They stem from the fact that some such attachments may receive an organizational expression while others may remain fully within the free domain of personal life. Even organizationally they can admit of variety and lead to friction.

The complexities of modern Jewish life, the variations within each national community and, even more, between different countries, are such that an attempt to force all Jewish contacts with Israel into one uniform pattern is not merely futile but definitely harmful.

There is great merit in an organized effort and there may be virtue in uniformity up to a point, but freedoms must reign supreme above all frameworks and barriers. The connection between Israel and the Jewish people must in the ultimate resort be direct, free and untrammelled by an formal limitation or organizational tradition.

You probably realize what dangerous ground I am now approaching in the course of this address which I am afraid has throughout been a series of risky and perilous corners. It is the question of the relationship, on the one hand, between Israel and the Zionist Organization and, on the other hand, between Israel and the Jewish communities of the free world.

I should like, first of all, to state unequivocally three facts which I believe to be incontrovertible.

First, the Jewish State is the child and product of the World Zionist movement. (Applause) It is true that in the final stages of its emergence Israel was helped into the world by a most remarkable manifestation of Jewish world unity to which Zionists,

non-Zionists and many former anti-Zionists contributed in an equal measure. But for decades past it was the Zionist movement which carried the banner of Jewish

Statehood alone and unaided--very often hampered and decried. It stood as the sole expression of the collective will of the Jewish people, demonstrating the capacity of the Jewish people to translate that will into action by creating concrete facts of Jewish strength in our country. It had to brave not only external obstacles but internal indifference and antagonism. By its massive achievement it brought the world, including world Jewry, to accept the Jewish state as a practical possibility and an imperative need. That is first.

Secondly, the functions discharged by the Zionist Organization were not terminated at the establishment of the State. They have been carried over into the new phase of our existence and development. Those functions--transportation of immigrants, settlement on the land, works of development--are in their nature state functions. Even before the establishment of the State, the Zionist Organization acted in fact as a state authority and had an acknowledged status.

Now that there is a Jewish State, the cooperation between it and the Zionist Organization is imperative and calls for a formal regulation. Functions must be delimited. Competences must be defined. Cooperation must be based on firm legal foundations. That does entail the grant to the World Zionist Organization of a certain status in Israel for specific purposes within the framework of the work the Zionist movement is doing and will go on doing in Israel.

The third fact is that Israel herself is vitally interested in the continued existence and growth of the Zionist movement, united in the World Zionist Organization in all countries where it is free to operate.

Israel owes to the Zionist movement its fullest possible cooperation and moral assistance. It regards the Zionist Organization as its foremost ally in Jewish life. Nevertheless, all these propositions--do not entail monopoly or exclusion. Israel is most vitally interested in the sympathy and support of all Jews and Jewish circles, whether Zionist or not. It is anxious to maintain close contact and bonds of solidarity and channels for mutual cultural influence with all Jewish circles and institutions interested in such cooperation.

Therefore, it should be clear that there can be no question of the Zionist Organization, or for that matter, of any organization, interposing between Israel and any Jewish circle, institution or group which do not form part of the Zionist movement. It is the responsibility of Israel to establish and maintain direct contact with all Jews seeking it, to be accessible to them all and to make each individual or group feel that they are completely at par with other Jewish individuals

and groups as far as their relations with or access to the State of Israel ~~are~~ concerned.

Israel is anxious to secure that world-wide Jewish cooperation, to seek their advice, to enter into consultation with them if only they are ready for it as it is anxious to rely on the help and advice of its fellow Zionists.

The intimacy of contact should be free of any residue of untoward tradition. It should depend on no other factor than the desire to cooperate and the relationship of mutual trust. It need not be influenced by past associations.

Let me emphasize again that such status as the parliament of Israel may choose to confer upon the Zionist Organization--to provide for certain practical needs and to legalise a certain position--can apply only and solely to the work of the Zionist Organization in Israel. The writ of the government of Israel does not extend outside its territory, and just as the government of Israel is completely and exclusively sovereign within the territory of Israel, so it disclaims any desire to interfere with or to influence communal Jewish life anywhere in the world. (Applause)

You are well aware that all these problems occupied a great deal of the attention of the Zionist Congress, about the proceedings of which you heard such a vivid account from Rose Halprin.

I think it is permissible to regard this Congress as only first of the series of occasions on which stock will have to be taken of the changes wrought in the world position of the Jewish people by the rise of Israel and the organizational conclusions which have to be drawn from that profound and revolutionary transformation of Jewish world relationships.

It is perhaps natural that the quest for a solution should lead to conflicts of formulations, some indicating the maximum, and some the minimum of commitments on the part of Israel to the Zionist movement.

The minimal formula has caused disappointment in Zionist circles. The maximal formula has given rise to misgivings among non-Zionists, I naturally refer only to those non-Zionists who are sincerely anxious to see Israel develop and prosper and vitally interested to play their part in the process.

I have no doubt that once the froth of controversy has simmered down and a definite arrangement has emerged, both the fears that the status may be inadequate and the fears that it may be excessive will prove unfounded.

I have taken the opportunity at what is after all a highly representative and competent Zionist gathering to clear up some of the problems which may not be in the forefront of your pre-occupations as the Hadassah Organization, but I assume engage your attention as part of the Zionist movement. Yours is a highly privileged position. If American Jewry is a miracle, the Hadassah is a miracle within a miracle. Its miraculous effect extends far beyond its organizational framework or geographic location. Just as the Jewish people is unique, just as American Jewry is in a certain sense unique, so is the Hadassah unique. And I would tell you primarily in what sense, at least as far as I can understand and appreciate you.

It is because whatever you do is good. (Applause) By saying that I do not mean to imply that the Hadassah can do no wrong--far be it from me to impute to you the terrifying virtue of infallibility--but the whole plane and trend of your activity are directed to the achievement of useful ends in a most practical and effective manner, without the slightest diversion of your energies to anything that is controversial or questionable.

Now, if I were you, I should not worry about the excessive practicalness of your work. Rest assured that as long as this work continues, as long as it is done with the same devotion, zeal and sincerity, the spiritual content of your movement will take care of itself. Your main problem is to increase the scope and intensity of your effort; to do more of the good you are already doing; if possible, though I doubt it very much, to do it even a little better; but mainly to do more of it in response to our growing needs.

One of the surest ways to increase the quantity is by improving the quality. I think that an indispensable qualification for continued membership of Hadassah should be a visit to Israel. (Applause) The full implementation of this condition may not be possible within a short period of time, but a long-term policy should be laid down such as would in the course of time enable all members of Hadassah to visit Israel in order that they should see with their own eyes primarily two things-- (a) what has been done by Hadassah and (b) what is waiting to be done by Hadassah. (Applause).

It is not only a question of seeing the institutions, the settlements, the schools, the hospitals, the factories, all the concrete values created; it is a question of capturing the spirit, of getting into the soul of what is being created and bring something of it back to America.

This relationship of ours, exceptional as it is, opens fascinating vistas for possibilities of human intercourse, for mutual influence and inspiration--ennobling, uplifting. We are anxious to learn from you whatever we can. When you come over, don't rush to go back--stay a little, do a little work, teach a little, but please understand that you must for yourself also learn. Find out what Israel means, what kind of a melting pot it is and what comes out of it. See for yourself what is so particularly fascinating, so deeply stirring: the magic effect upon both, people and country, of their miraculous reunion.

No one can predict the future forms of Jewish unity and of Jewish attachment to Israel. It is up to our generation to lay the foundations of the great structure of creative Jewish life of the future. You can justly be proud of your record in that big enterprise.

May that record impose an obligation on you to make your effort really worthy of the great hour.