

***"The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution",  
David Ben-Gurion (1944)***

The Jewish revolution is not the first or only one in the history of the world, but it is perhaps the most difficult. There have been a number of great revolutions - it suffices to mention the English revolution in the seventeenth century, the American and French revolutions in the eighteenth century, and the Russian revolution in our own time - and there will be others. However, the Jewish revolution is fundamentally of a different order and its task is, therefore, all the more difficult. All other revolts, both past and future, were uprisings against a system, against a political, social, or economic structure. Our revolution is directed not only against a system but against destiny, against the unique destiny of a unique people.

In all the history of the world there is no more fantastic phenomenon than this centuries long resistance of ours. Heroism is a universal quality and examples of it are to be found in the annals of every nation, both ancient and modern. In our own time, millions displayed tremendous heroism in the Second World War, but there is nothing in the history of mankind to compare to the power of resistance and the unshakable tenacity of our people over the course of centuries and millennia. The fate of being uprooted and exiled from the homeland has been suffered by other nations, as well as the Jews, but all the others, without exception have disappeared from the stage of history after a few decades. The Jews are the only example of a small, exiled, and forever hated people that stood fast and never surrendered from the time of their revolt against persecution by Hadrian to the recent uprisings in the ghettos of Warsaw, Lublin, and Bialystok. Resistance by a small people for so many centuries to so many powerful enemies - to refuse to surrender to historic destiny - this, in short, is the essential significance of Jewish history of the dispersion.

What, therefore, is the meaning of our contemporary Jewish revolution – this revolt against destiny which the vanguard of the Jewish national renaissance has been cultivating in this small country for the last three generations? In the dispersion the Jewish people knew the courage of non-surrender, even in the face of the noose and the auto-da-fe, even, as in our day, in the face of being buried alive by the tens of thousands. But the makers of the contemporary Jewish revolution have asserted: Resisting fate is not enough. We must master our fate, we must take our destiny into

our own hands! This is the doctrine of the Jewish revolution - not non-surrender to the dispersion but making an end of it.

Dispersion means dependence - material, political, spiritual, cultural, and intellectual dependence because we are aliens, a minority, bereft of a homeland, rootless and separated from the soil, from labor, and from basic industry. Our task is to break radically with this dependence and to become masters of our own fate - in a word, to achieve independence.

The meaning of the Jewish revolution is contained in one word - independence! Independence for the Jewish people in its homeland! Dependence is not merely political or economic; it is also moral, cultural, and intellectual, and it affects every limb and nerve of the body every conscious and subconscious act. Independence, too, means more than political and economic freedom. It involves also the spiritual, moral, and intellectual realms and, in essence, it is independence in the heart, in sentiment, and in will.

From this inner sense of freedom outer forms of independence will develop in our way of life, social organization, relations with other people, and economic structure. Our independence will be shaped further by the conquest of labor and the land, by broadening the range of our language and its culture, by perfecting the methods of self-government and self-defense, by creating the framework and conditions for national independence and creativity, and finally - by attaining political independence. This is the essence of the Jewish revolution.

*Source: The Imperatives of the Jewish Revolution, David Ben-Gurion, Haifa, 1944*  
*Quoted in Zionism-Israel website:* [http://zionism-israel.com/hdoc/Ben-Gurion\\_Jewish\\_revolution.htm](http://zionism-israel.com/hdoc/Ben-Gurion_Jewish_revolution.htm)

**“Address to the Mapai Central Committee”,  
David Ben-Gurion (1948)**

There is a clear feeling that the entire history of the Jewish nation has been folded into the seven or eight months ahead, upon which shall depend the Jewish history to come, perhaps for hundreds or thousands of years. I am incapable, and do not want to see at present beyond the next seven or eight months, because in my opinion they will determine everything - for during this period the war will be decided, and there is nothing that exists for me now other than this war.

It is necessary that we take up the yoke of war and show a greater will to win than those others. We shall do it, precisely because for us war is not a goal in itself, and we see war as a terrible accursed misfortune, and resort to war only from lack of choice - war and peace are nothing more than means to something else - that "something" will give us the advantage that our enemies do not have and that is denied to the followers of violence: a vision of life, a vision of national rebirth, of independence, equality and peace - for the Jewish nation and for all peoples of the world.

This vision shall not detract, but quite the opposite, will add to our war effort, amplify our strength and give us an advantage, perhaps decisive, over our enemies.

*Source: Address to the Mapai Central Committee, David Ben-Gurion, 1948. Quoted in Zionism-Israel website: [http://zionism-israel.com/hdoc/Ben\\_gurion\\_Speech\\_Jan\\_1948.htm](http://zionism-israel.com/hdoc/Ben_gurion_Speech_Jan_1948.htm)*

**“Speech to Special Session of Knesset in Honor of his 85th Birthday”,  
David Ben-Gurion (1971)**

What, then, is the meaning of this miraculous political, cultural and economic phenomenon, unparalleled in human history? The deep human connection to the ancient homeland of Israel and to the Hebrew language - the language of the Book of Books whose like does not exist in the world, which has been translated into more than 1,400 tongues - these are the deep, hidden wellsprings from which the dispersed people of Israel drew the moral and emotional strength in exile to withstand the centuries-long hardships of life in foreign lands, and to continue until the advent of the national redemption. Whoever does not regard the vision of redemption, of Jewish and universal redemption, as one of the primary distinguishing features of the nation, does not see the basic truth of Jewish history and the cornerstone of Jewish belief.

Within the Zionist movement one can discern ancient sources, sources almost as old as the people itself. These sources are connected with the saga of the first Hebrew, whose name God changed from Abram to Abraham, saying, "I have given to you and to your descendants after you the land of your dwelling, the entire land of Canaan as a permanent possession." (Genesis 17:8)

Neither Herzl nor Hess nor even Spinoza invented the idea of a Jewish state. For hundreds of years, Jews prayed the following words thrice daily: "Sound the great shofar for our freedom; lift up the banner to bring our exiles together, and assemble us from the four corners of the earth, and may our eyes behold thy return in mercy to Zion."

*Source: Speech to Special Session of Knesset in Honor of his 85th Birthday, David Ben-Gurion, 1971, Quoted in Azure no. 6, Winter 5759 / 1999.*  
<http://azure.org.il/include/print.php?id=319>

### ***“Memoirs”, David Ben-Gurion (1970)***

Well, the country was very sparsely settled then. This was in 1908. The Jewish villages, the new ones established to cultivate the land, numbered less than twenty. I had arrived in 1906 and since then not a single Jewish community had been added to the existing number. There were some pioneers in the Galilee. But they were preparing the land for permanent settlements and we needed people to put down roots throughout the country. I recall hearing the welcome news a year or so later that another settlement was being built. It was the first one in my time and consisted of only six houses near Tiberias, all owned by five brothers. Small as this was, it seemed a vindication of our faith.

Walking through the barren plain, seeing only an occasional tribe of nomadic Bedouins (they still roam the country at will, largely impervious both to civilization and politics) and a few poverty-stricken Arab villages, I was sure even then that this land would become entirely Jewish. I knew we had here the ideal opportunity to prove our mettle and ourselves as Jews. There was nothing here. It was literally a forgotten corner of the Turkish Empire and of the globe. Nobody wanted it, certainly not the Palestinian Arabs who were placidly vegetating in their poverty under the Turks. Their subsequent indignation at the Jewish presence was fomented artificially by special interest groups and the propaganda machines of the surrounding Arab nations. Were the Jews to disappear from Israel, which they won't, one thing is sure. The Arabs of Palestine would have no chance for autonomy given the expansionism of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and, to a lesser degree, Lebanon. Of that one can be certain!

In any event, when I came here, no one could have cared less about the place. Anyone was free to come and create afresh.

I believed then, as I do today, that we held a clear title to this country. Not the right to take it away from others (there were no others), but the right and the duty to fill its emptiness, restore life to its barrenness, to re-create a modern version of our ancient nation. And I felt we owed this effort not only to ourselves but to the land as well.

*Source: Memoirs, David Ben-Gurion, The World Publishing Company, New York, 1970. P. 25.*