

Ben-Gurion *speaks*

For centuries the Jewish people have enriched the world through talented leaders in many fields. Among the outstanding men from that group in modern times has been David Ben-Gurion. To him the Jewish people owe a great debt, for the formation of Israel was in large measure due to his vision, his strategy, and his perseverance. From him the rest of the world can gain much as they examine his leadership in making Israel a remarkable laboratory of economic and social development.

He was born in Polonsk, Poland on October 16, 1886. Because of the early death of his mother, he was raised largely by his father and tremendously influenced by him, especially in his espousal of Zionism. While still in his early teens, he helped to organize a club for the promotion of that cause.

Emigrating to Palestine at the age of 19, he worked as a farmer and laborer and later as a labor organizer. From 1921 until 1935 he was Secretary General of the General Federation of Jewish Labor (popularly known as the Histadrut). He helped to organize the Mapai Party, a political offshoot of the Histadrut. Eventually he rose to the position of chairman of the powerful and important worldwide Jewish Agency.

Throughout his life his one absorbing passion has been the creation of Israel as a homeland for Jews. Upon the creation of that country on May 14, 1948, he became its Prime Minister, a post he has held most of the time during Israel's first ten years.

Out of the turmoil of a long, busy, and creative life he speaks to Jews and to all broad-minded persons everywhere:

ON THE UNITY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE . . .

"There is a national unity of the Jews of the world — a unity based upon a common destiny, a great common historical heritage, and common aspirations for the future. What has secured the survival of the Jewish people throughout the generations and led to the creation of the State is the Messianic vision of the prophets of Israel, the vision of redemption for the Jewish people and for all humanity. The State of Israel is an instrument for the realization of this Messianic vision."

ON PRIDE IN THE PAST . . .

"We bring to posterity the gift of a great and ancient past."

"The qualities of the spirit, moral and intellectual, are no less determinant in history than material wealth and great numbers. Judea and Greece played a far greater part than any of the great nations of their times or that came after, and their influence still persists."

"Were I asked to sum up the age-long trend of Jewish history, I should answer in three words: Quality against Quantity."

ON THE BIBLE . . .

"The Bible is the history of a people that has left an eternal mark on human culture and the dialogues in the Book of Job are superior to any dialogue of Plato in their moral fervor, their poetic power, and their profundity of spiritual expression."

" . . . nothing can surpass the Bible as lighting up the manifold problems of our life and their recondite causes. There can be no worthwhile political or military education about Israel without profound knowledge of the Bible."

ON MUTUAL MISUNDERSTANDING . . .

"In our exile we saw the world with eyes of fear, strangeness or envy, disparagement or self-denial, for we had no equal share or parity in it. Perhaps we could not understand other people, garbed as we were either in gloomy feelings of inferiority or an unblushing sense of superiority. At best, again, we used to copy others out of deference, or sneered at their behavior and their ways, just because we had not come as far. Little, however, as we understood them, they understood us less, for their experience of nations had no satisfactory rod with which to measure us; for them we were not different but deformed."

ON ZIONISM . . .

"Zionism originates in the simple truth that there are not only individual Jews; there is a Jewish nation."

ON A VISION OF GREATNESS . . .

"Where there is no vision the people perish — and it is just because of the greatness of the everyday purpose, and the heaviness of the load, that it is our duty to kindle the ultimate flame and illumine our every act with the visionary spirit. Only if we hold the vision close will we chart a safe course through the mounting billows of this vexed sea of our times."

ON THE GOALS OF ISRAEL . . .

"Our civilization here will be built on two foundations; on the Bible and on all that was great in Jewish creation, and on the modern achievements of civilization. It will not be based on the domination of people over people, but on the domination of nature over nature, on the strength of science and technology."

ON ISRAEL'S DIFFICULTIES . . .

" . . . if it is difficult to be a Jew, and it was always terribly difficult at all times, it is more difficult to be a Jewish State."

"From the start, Israel's conditions of survival, its internal and its external aims, its place in the world, its security and its relations with its neighbors, were coiled in difficulties no other country knows."

"This is a people unique, hurled to all the ends of the earth, speaking with many tongues, apprenticed to alien cultures, asunder in different communities and tribes within the House of Israel. We must melt down this fantastically divergent assemblage and cast it afresh in the die of a renewed nationhood. We must break down the barriers of geography and culture, of society and speech, which keep the different sections apart, and endow them with a single language, a single culture, a single citizenship, a single loyalty, with new legislation and new laws. We must draw them into new social and political orbits and attach them to our past and to our vision of sovereignty, in self-government, in liberty, in Jewish unity, in brotherhood, in mutual aid and collective responsibility. And at the same time, we must take thought for their security, for the security of the State, its freedom and its place among the nations. All this we must do in a tempest-tossed and riven world where peace hangs on a slender thread and we are encompassed by malevolence and enmity."

"The position of the land at the meeting of three continents has made it, small though it is, a bridge and battlefield for the conquerors of the world. . . . This is the magnet of empires, for good and for ill."

ON ISRAEL'S ACHIEVEMENTS . . .

"I believe it to be no exaggeration if I say that there is no other country in the world, either now or in any other time, where such great things were achieved in such a short time under such difficult conditions."

"Great and wonderful deeds have been accomplished in Israel within the few years since it was established. Hundreds of new villages have been set up; new towns have been built, industry has been expanded, free compulsory education has been instituted, and our institutions of higher education and scientific research have been improved and extended, a young original literature has been created, social reforms of great importance for the workers and the masses have been achieved, capital on a large scale (private, public and government capital, international loans, reparations, and voluntary contributions for the upbuilding of the country) has been secured in the free world, the standard of living of the people has been raised, well-developed public services have been established, and last, but not least, we have organized, equipped and trained the finest and most effective army in the Middle East."

"The State of Israel straightened the back of every Jew wherever he lived."

" . . . in this country the Jews have fundamentally altered their economic way of life, despite all precedents, in apparent violation of sociological laws, and taken up manual labor and the tilling of the soil. . . . "

ON MEANS OF FOSTERING UNITY . . .

"Hebrew education, the vision of Messianic redemption for the Jewish people and for humanity, and an ever-strengthened attachment to Israel — this is the threefold thread that can unite and bind together all sections and trends in Jewry in all the countries of the dispersion, and if those who are loyal to our people in Israel and the Diaspora so will it — the thread shall never be broken."

ON EDUCATION . . .

"The education on which depends the future of the State no less than of immigrants, will not be confined to the schools. No doubt the new generation, born or brought up here, will assimilate and adapt itself as did the children of earlier settlers. But we dare not, we cannot wait until that new generation grows up. The work of educating and helping in assimilation must be extended to all immigrants of all ages. The deep and rapid change which can be effected in a child cannot be effected in an adult immigrant at the same rate or with the same ease. But we have a powerful instrument besides the school, and it is the Army."

ON HEALTH . . .

"Israel, new and clamant, demands of its repatriates health and bodily strength above all. It is not only our security that may collapse if we do not breed a generation sound and sturdy in mind and limb — and in spirit. None that are wanting in soul or body can bring back fruitfulness to the desert. War against the vast, reluctant wilderness exacts the selfless enthusiasm of pioneers as well as a giant's strength."

ON FOREIGN RELATIONS . . .

"But the fact that our place is in the camp of those who love freedom and democracy does not prevent us from cherishing the desire to maintain normal relations with every country in the world, no matter what its internal regime may be."

ON THE MIDDLE EAST . . .

"We believe, we are convinced, that peace in the Middle East is a necessity for peace in the world. We are convinced that peace in the Middle East is a necessity for all the people in the Middle East. We know that co-operation between us and our neighbors — economic, political, cultural and social co-operation, will be a blessing to all people in this part of the world. It will do away with the appalling poverty of the Arab people, with their diseases and their ignorance and may once again turn these countries into prosperous and civilized centers as they were in olden times."

"We believe the problem of the settlement of the refugees can be solved. We ourselves have settled more than 700,000 (1956 figure) refugees, half of them victims of the Nazis and half refugees from Arab countries. We could help our neighbors. We want them to be as prosperous and healthy and educated as we want our people to be. We believe that one country alone cannot remain healthy and prosperous if surrounded by others which are not."

ON RESEARCH AND EDUCATION IN THE FUTURE . . .

"Research and education, all intellectual endeavors in Israel are in vain if they do not take in the total world—research into atom and stars, the realm of plant and animal life, the secrets of earth and seas, winds and weather and all that nature stores in the heavens above and on the earth beneath; man's exploits from his first appearance on life's scene, his struggles, his ups and downs, his wrestlings with himself and his fellow-men, interminable and ubiquitous, as individual and as member of society. Our literature will be in vain no less if it does not encompass all the inventions of human thought — scientific, artistic, philosophical, religious and poetical, all ever written in Hebrew or by Jews, and about Jewry, in a foreign language."

" . . . it is possible that there await us difficulties and dangers no less great than those in the first decade, but we look to the future with confidence . . . "

"And to our people I should like to say, 'No complacency but no despair.' "

Additional copies may be obtained from:

Leonard S. Kenworthy

Brooklyn College, Brooklyn 10, N. Y.

5c per copy

25—\$1

60—\$2

100—\$3

Other titles in the Speaks Series include: Jane Addams, Aggrey, Robert Barclay, Bunche, Ceresole, Chisholm, Einstein, Emerson, George Fox, Elizabeth Fry, Gandhi, Gibran, Goethe, Hammarkjold, Carl Heath, William James, Jefferson, Jesus, James Weldon Johnson, Rufus Jones, Kagawa, Thomas Kelly, Lie, Lincoln, Nehru, Nkrumah, Nu, Orr, Penington, Penn, Rowntree, Schweitzer, Tagore, Thoreau, Tolstoy, Wesley, Whitehead, Whittier, and Woolman.