Ben Gurion's Prophecy

THE PROMISED LAND

The establishment of the Jewish State was not an easy process, even after the Balfour Declaration (1917) in which the British, and later the League of Nations, recognized the right of the Jewish people to a National Home and assigned for the future Jewish homeland the entire territory of modern-day Israel plus the territory of Jordan. Two problems arose: first, the incessant violence and aggression of the Arabs and their refusal to accept a Jewish State. But the most serious issue was that Jewish leaders like Hayim Weizmann or Sir Herbert Samuel had assured the British authorities that once they have their land, Jews would arrive fast and in large numbers … but they did not … the conditions in Israel were very difficult and the "millions" of Jews who were escaping from Europe emigrated mostly to America.

PEEL COMMISSION

In 1936 a special commission headed by Lord Robert Peel was established to reassess the situation of the future Jewish state and unfortunately, the commission concluded that this project was unfeasible and should be abolished. The commission assigned only a few small and isolated territories where the relatively few Jews who were there will live (17% of Israel's today's territory. See here). But miraculously, and before this division of territories had an official character, it was canceled because the Arabs providentially rejected the offer of the English (75% of Israel's territory. See map)

THE GREAT SPEECH

Anyway, today I want to tell you about the impressive (but not very well known) speech that David Ben-Gurion gave before the Peel commission to convince the English that the arrival of the Jews in Israel might take time, but it was imminent. Ben-

Gurion insisted that the historical memory of the Jewish people, allows us to forget neither our origins nor our destination. To illustrate this point, Ben Gurion intelligently used the example of the “Mayflower”, when the first English settlers arrived in America in 1620. The story of the Mayflower represents the founding of the modern United States and the primordial link between the United States and England.

BRITISH TRIVIA

Ben-Gurion addressed the English and the U.S. representatives saying: Over 300 years ago, a ship, whose name was the “Mayflower,” arrived in the New World. The Mayflower’s arrival at Plymouth Rock was one of the greatest historical events in the history of England and the United States of America. But I would like to ask any Englishman here on the committee: What day did the Mayflower leave the English harbor? And I would like to ask Americans: do you know when exactly the Mayflower arrived in the new world? Or how many people were on that boat? Who was the captain? How long did the journey take? What kind of food did they bring to eat on the boat?

BEN GURION’S PROPHECY

More than 3,300 years ago, long before the Mayflower departure, our people left Egypt, and any Jewish child in the world, wherever he is, knows: what day we left Egypt, how many of us we were there, who our leader was, how long the journey lasted for and even what food they ate when they left. What’s more: we still eat this food every year on the anniversary of our departure from Egypt. And we celebrate this event with a festive dinner where we tell the story of our beginnings to our children and grandchildren to ensure it will never be forgotten. And at the end of that ceremony, we say a very famous phrase: “Next year in Jerusalem.” Now we are trapped in the Soviet Union or Germany, where Hitler is destroying us, and we are still scattered all over the world. And although

right now our return to the land of Israel is not visible, eventually, next year or the next we will return to Israel, because ***in the same way that we never forget our origin, we will never forget our final destination: Jerusalem.***

And so it was …

Rabbi Yosef Bitton