

# PRESS BULLETIN

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Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day Address  
by the Prime Minister, Mr. Levi Eshkol  
April 9, 1964, Ha' Hazikron, Jerusalem.

Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day falls between our ancient festival of freedom, Passover, and the Independence Day of modern Israel.

In our exodus from Egyptian bondage, we acquired our national sovereignty, in days of old. In our own time, we rose once more to independence out of the blood and ashes of the Holocaust.

Let us consider today both aspects of this most terrible chapter in Jewish annals--the aspect of holocaust and the aspect of heroism. Both have been a part of the life of the Jewish people throughout most of our history. We underwent the oppression of foreign kingdoms at home and persecution in Exile, and through all this there runs a never-ending chain of Jewish heroism--the heroism of desperation as well as the heroism of construction. And manifestations of Jewish heroism there have always been, both when the Jews were fighting their own battles and when they were fighting in the wars of other nations, just as there has always been some form of independent Jewish existence.

As we free ourselves from the concept of the Jewish people in Exile as a passive object of history rather than an active subject, and as the scholars enable us more and more to see Jewish history from the point of view of what the Jewish people has done rather than of what has been done to it, the aspect of heroism becomes increasingly obvious.

Every day, before our very eyes, there come to light new chapters of heroism. Only in recent days, at the Auschwitz trial now taking place in Germany, we learned more details about the Jewish rebellion in that camp, which occurred at a time when all hope was gone but for the fervid will to see, at the very least, that the murderers pay for the blood they shed.

But in the Holocaust period there also took place a "Jewish war." The ghetto revolts, the war of the Jewish partisans who struck at the enemy wherever they encountered them and, at the same time, sought to keep alive a Jewish nucleus that would emerge from the forests when the liberation came; and this nucleus went on to play its part in the establishment of the State of Israel.

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Lately there have been heard some objections to this view of Jewish resistance to the Nazis. As though the Holocaust had not been enough for us, there are now those who now say that we are guilty of having resisted inadequately; or though the Jewish community had been responsible for this. These people now want to pin the label of collaborator on the victim.

Our people knows, and knows at first hand, that this simply is not so. I mentioned Auschwitz. We know that in addition to the 2.5 million Jews put to death there, no fewer than two million members of other nationalities were exterminated. But it was the Jews who revolted, even in Auschwitz. We have heard of no others, but far be it from us to hold this against them. We know how the very terror of the Holocaust paralyzed resistance.

Furthermore, the history of the Holocaust refutes the evil charge that it was because the Jewish communities were organized, it was easier to carry through the slaughter. We know of a large community of Jews that was not organized at all, yet death reaped its toll there no less thoroughly than elsewhere.

The manifestations of Jewish heroism will always remain a great object lesson to the Jewish people--both the martyrdom of Massada and the liberation of the Maccabees. The victorious war against the Nazis laid the foundation for the restoration of Jewish national sovereignty. In this respect, Jewish resistance to the Nazis and the War of Liberation in this country were one war. The geographical proximity between the Yad Vashem, on the Mount of Remembrance, and the Mount Herzl National Leaders' and Military Cemetery is of more than mere geographic significance

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There is no restitution for the grievous wound that was inflicted on the body of the Jewish people in the Holocaust. In the Eichmann trial, an attempt was made to assess what the Jewish people would have been like had it not been for the Holocaust and what a great loss we suffered. I do not know if it is possible to reach a final assessment. There is one thing we do know: we emerged from the Holocaust a living nation. Our bloodied people displayed marvelous vitality and tremendous powers of regeneration. Other Jewish communities, which had been touched by the Holocaust but who are part and parcel of the Jewish people, were moved to join the rest of us in restoring Jewish national sovereignty and in the upbuilding of the State of Israel. In this respect, we all of us come into the category of "the saving remnant."

Both our material and our spiritual resources will be required in order that the world shall never again look down upon the Jews as a helpless victim. Never again shall the shadow of Holocaust darken the pages of Jewish history as it did during the two thousand years of Exile.

This obligation is not ours, the Jews of Israel, alone. All the resources of the entire Jewish people will be needed. History calls upon us to renew the common bond of destiny and the partnership of creativity with Jewish communities that have lost contact with the main body of Jewry. History commands the mobilization of all Jewish resources--the inner as well as the material resources--in the cause of the new Jewish life symbolized by the State of Israel.

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The Holocaust is a dark period in Jewish history. No individual, not the entire nation, is capable of expressing the depths of our bereavement. However, we must learn to face up to this period as it was. It must become part of our national and historical consciousness; we must not shut our eyes to it timidly and try to wish it out of our collective memory. Whatever other significance the Eichmann trial may or may not have had, in this respect it was invaluable. The trial has made it impossible for the young people of Israel not to acknowledge their fraternal bond with the glory that was European Jewry. Side by side with the rejection of exile, there is now identification with the Diaspora. Out of a recognition of the community of destiny has come a determination to build a common future for the Jewish people.

Let us, then, accept the lesson of this chapter of our history and the duty it imposes upon us for the future. There are no short cuts for learning the lessons of our distant past--of the past recounted in the Bible and the past now being uncovered in the ruins of Massada. The arteries of our national vitality run through the entire history of the Jewish people, and through them we are in duty bound to receive and accept the lessons of the terror of the Holocaust and the glory of heroism which are inextricably linked. Then, and only then, "out of the hills of dusk we shall once more hew a flame."