

This Week in Jewish History

Highlights from "The Israel Bible"

6 Kislev

Yahrzeit of David Ben Gurion a"h

David Ben-Gurion (1886-1973) was born in Poland and immigrated to Israel in 1906. He is considered Israel's "founding father", as he formally declared the establishment of the State on May 14, 1948, and was the first to sign the Israeli Declaration of Independence which he helped write. Ben-Gurion was the first Prime Minister of the State of Israel, serving from May 1948 - January 1954, and again from November 1955 - June 1963.

In a speech given in 1944 to a gathering of youth groups in Haifa, David Ben Gurion referred to the the following verse as an example of how Judaism serves as a paradigm of a society built on morality, peace and love:

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am Hashem (Vayikra 19:18)

Ben Gurion said: "Ours was a tiny nation inhabiting a small country, and there have been many tiny nations and many small countries, but ours was a tiny nation possessed of a great spirit; an inspired people that believed in its pioneering mission to all men, in the mission that had been preached by the prophets of Israel. This people gave the world great and eternal moral truths

and commandments. This people rose to prophetic visions of the unity of the Creator with His creation, of the dignity and infinite worth of the individual because every man is created in the divine image, of social justice, universal peace, and love: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' This people was the first to prophesy about 'the end of days', the first to see the vision of a new human society."

Even though Ben-Gurion was not a religious Jew, he was deeply influenced by the Bible, which had a profound impact on his outlook and his actions on behalf of the Jewish State.

"If an expert says it can't be done, get another expert." - David Ben-Gurion

8 Kislev

Yahrzeit of Golda Meir a"h

Golda Meir (1898-1978) was born in Kiev, and immigrated first to the United States and then to Israel in 1921. She served as Israel's fourth Prime Minister from March 1969 - June 1974, the only woman to have held this position to date.

And who is like Your people Yisrael, a unique nation on Earth, whom Hashem went and redeemed as His people, winning renown for Yourself for great and marvelous deeds, driving out nations before Your people whom You redeemed from Egypt (Divrei Hayamim Alef 17:21)

In this verse, Israel is referred to not only as a "people" but as a "singular nation on earth." Throughout history, the unique character of the Jewish

people has been variously described, by friend and foe alike, as a people, a nation, a religion and even a race. It is hard to pin down the exact nature of the Jewish people, but it certainly seems to contain elements of both nationality and spirituality that deeply connect Jews with one another.

During the first bloody week of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, a soldier stationed on the Golan Heights asked Prime Minister Golda Meir about the many casualties Israel had suffered, "I know we will win, but is all our sacrifice worthwhile?" The Prime Minister replied, "If our sacrifices are for ourselves, then no. But if for the sake of the whole Jewish people, then I believe with all my heart that any price is worthwhile." Her message was that the State of Israel would serve as a safe haven not only for Israelis, but for the entire People of Israel all over the world. Indeed, "who is like Your people Yisrael?"

"Those who don't know how to weep with their whole heart, don't know how to laugh either." - Golda Meir

"The Israel Bible" is edited by Rabbi Tuly Weisz and co-published by Israel365 & Koren Jerusalem's Menorah Books and was the #1 new release Bible on Amazon