

Isaiah Wolfsberg, *The State of Israel in Historic Perspective*

The pangs of redemption correspond to the suffering of exile. The rebirth of the Jewish people after its age-long homelessness has proceeded in modern times in a line which fluctuated between promise and despair. Its high marks were: the Hibbat Zion movement of the past century and its successor, the World Zionist Organization; the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate; the efforts, the toil and dedication of the pioneers; the Peel Commission Report of 1937; the decision of the United Nations of 1947; and, finally, the proclamation of the State in Tel-Aviv on May 14, 1948. Each great event was followed by a recession marked by breach of faith and bloody conflict.

But the State exists and exist it shall, albeit we may be destined to pay for it with more travail than most resurrected nations pay for theirs.

For two millenia Jewish civilization survived and thrived without the framework of a state. It was thus denied one of the essential ingredients of a healthy existence. Yet, despite the absence of a political life, the Jews preserved much of the thinking habits and much of the political wisdom which are required for the successful conduct of difficult affairs of state. The consciousness that the ultimate goal of Jewish history was the re-establishment of the Commonwealth in Palestine never left the Jews.

The foundations upon which the State of Israel shall rest are deeply imbedded in Jewish civilization through the laws of the Torah. The main foundations are peace and harmony both inside the polity and in relations with other states. While cultivating the aesthetic side of life, Judaism seeks to make the moral principle supreme.

In discussing the restoration of the Jewish State, one can hardly avoid touching on the Messianic vision of the future. Viewed objectively, it would seem that in the Jews' aspiration for political sovereignty and in the proclamation of the State is reflected the collective Jewish will to hasten the redemption of mankind. As a people, we long for universal human salvation, for an era of international brotherhood. But we do not wish it to involve national suicide. Our own renaissance will enable us to make our contribution to bringing in the great era of world peace. It is inconceivable that we should have triumphed in this great achievement and that our historic determination would have persisted, if not for the idealism with which it was infused which is not content with a mere egotistical objective.

We have been building the state at the cost of bloody sacrifices. Deep is our joy, but it is a joy taken in historic perspective. The generations yet to come will rejoice at this great triumph without feeling the pain or tragedy that is our lot.