

Chairmen and Gentlemen,

Yet another few days and you will take your seat in judgment on Israel and Zion. It will depend on you whether our already unbearable tragedy is to widen and deepen still further, whether we are to be cast into the depths of final despair or whether this period of our profoundest agony shall become also that of our greatest hope. This I ask of you in the name of all that is sacred and dear to us, in the name what is dearer to us than life itself: Try not our cause by everyday canons, let not your deliberations be governed by conventional standards. Rise to the heights of the task for which Providence has appointed you. Judge us as we have lived and died, judge us as we have suffered and survived, judge us as we have prayed and believed. Our chapter is unique in the story of mankind, without parallel or precedent. Judge it then, I pray you, in such context. View it in the Spinozian phrase Sub specie aeternatis, from the aspect of that eternity in which our life and faith have been rooted from ages immemorial ! Consider it from the sublime heights of the prophetic interpretation of history !

Gentlemen, the recognition of our right to establish our National Home in this tiny country is for us a matter of life and death. It is not only a question of gathering to our midst our tormented brethren wandering among the ash-heaps of a third of Israel. This land alone can heal their grievous wounds, it alone possesses the magic power of reviving the dry bones of the remnants of the unprecedented slaughter that, as in the vision of Ezekiel, they might arise and live and thrive and prove a source of blessing for their own people and the whole of mankind. But the restoration of Zion means something far more vital than this salvaging of the brands snatched from the Nazi inferno. Apart from the prophetic and religious aspects, it means normalising once and for all the status of the

one homeless and landless people on the face of the earth, of that nation which has given to the world two great religions and so much of lasting value to civilisation. It means a great momentous historic act of reparation on the part of the nations of the world to Israel. It means restoring at once the mental and spiritual equilibrium of our people. We plead to be relieved of that pariah status which has been our tragic lot for well-nigh two thousand years. To our Arab cousins with whom we have much in common and for whom we have both esteem and natural sympathy Palestine, after all, represents but a fragment of a vast empire; for us it is the beginning and the end of all. It has been spuriously alleged that a Jewish majority would maltreat a non-Jewish minority in its midst; it has even been averred that non-Jewish religions would be adversely affected by the change of Palestine from its present status to that of a Jewish Commonwealth. Such suggestions can only be made by people who forget that already more than three thousand years ago the Divine legislator knew of no more powerful support for his appeal to the Jew to love the stranger in his midst than by reminding him of the injustice he had suffered in consequence of the hatred of the stranger in Egypt. Truly our exile has taught us to hate, but to hate hatred ! As for the second allegation here we the Chief Rabbinate of the Holy land stand to declare that the Jewish people will not in any form whatsoever seek to impose its religion or traditions on those of other faiths by force, by persuasion or by any other means. In the Jewish Commonwealth every community would have full autonomy in administering its religious and cultural affairs in accordance with its traditions within a similar framework as that provided for in the Mandate. Every community will administer freely its own institutions without any interference whatsoever on the part of the State. The Holy Places of the several religions shall be under the guardianship of those to whom they are dear.

I shall not take up your valuable time with repetition of the numerous sacred texts on which we Jews base our claim to Palestine, nor with a review of the way in which Jewish religious life, law and ritual mirror at countless points that immovable age-old faith in Zion's restoration which has quickened the Jewish soul in every age and clime and which has provided the spiritual national driving force issuing in Zionism. A reading of the memoranda on this subject in your possession -- presented by religious leaders in Anglo-Saxon countries and by my revered Sephardic colleague -- will provide you with an adequate commentary on a saying of a Great ancient master which sums up the position 'For a Jew to live outside the Land of Israel is in a sense like living away from G-d'. Other religions have holy places in Palestine. In the Jewish religious concept every inch of Palestinian soil is sacred and this sanctity finds practical concrete expression in specific religious laws which apply with reference to the soil and produce of this country, and of this country only. But apart from the absence of that spiritual completeness which only the Holy Land can supply, Jewish religious life in the Diaspora is necessarily exposed under the Force of environment and under the stress of modern economic conditions to a constant process of attrition; and this all the more so in countries where Jews enjoy political and civic equality with their fellow-men of other creeds. For Example, a Jew in the Diaspora who fulfils the injunction of Judaism and abstains from all work on the Sabbath is greatly handicapped and barred from many of the opportunities, which are open to his fellows. This state of affairs has resulted in a woeful deterioration in the observance of the Sabbath which is a centre pillar of Judaism. A Jewish Palestine is thus necessary not the least for the preservation of our religion. In passing I may also mention the painful fact that even in Palestine thousands of Jews are virtually compelled to work on the Sabbath by military and governmental authorities. The many

protests on the part of the Chief Rabbinate and representative Jewish national and labour organisations against this blatant disregard for the Jewish religion have not as yet yielded appreciable results. The authorities, I must regretfully say, have not fulfilled their duty under the Mandate in this respect nor have they shown any awareness of their responsibility to the noble British tradition of respect for the religions of all men. However, there is time yet, pending the great historic change which we so anxiously await, for matters to improve in this direction and it is to be hoped that they will improve.

The history of the latest phase of Zionism and the present state of Jewry have already been outlined to you by Dr. Weizmann with admirable clarity and profundity. In connection with the religious aspect, may I only recall to you the religious enthusiasm which greeted the issuance of the Balfour Declaration. It sent a messianic thrill through the whole of Jewry from one end of the globe to the other. It was hailed as initiating the fulfilment of the divine promise of Israel's national Return to Zion, and I may be permitted to recall that on one occasion His late Majesty King George V made public mention of his gratification at the opportunity of helping in the realisation of the prophetic assurances to Israel. You have seen for yourselves what has been accomplished in this country since the appearance of the Declaration. The outside world hears much of strife and bitterness in our land. You, gentlemen, have had a glimpse of the other side of the picture. You have witnessed at first hand the noble structure, physical and spiritual, which our young community has erected in so short a space of time. Palestine is to-day not only the national centre of Jewry but also the focus-point of its religious learning as well as of its specific Hebraic culture.

The White Paper represents an attempt to damn up this stream of vitality and revival. I do not believe it has succeeded much in this respect, and indeed I never believed it could; this stream draws its waters

from sources which lie beyond the tampering hands of mortals. But history will have to record that in the course of its sinister ill-fated career the White Paper in the words of the prophet Obadiah 'Stood at the cross-roads to cut down our escaped ones and to hand over our survivors in the day of distress'. At the Arab-Jewish conference in St. James' Palace in 1939 I quoted Numbers Ch. 35 regarding the law ordaining the establishment of Cities of Refuge. Surely, I asked, How much more is it the sacred and bounden duty of the civilised nations to keep wide open the gates of Palestine, the only place of refuge for our brethren, who will try to fly from their wilful murderers, to whom no guilt attaches other than that they are the bearers of the Sinaitic tradition. This alas was not done; the gates were slammed shut and what happened happened.

And throughout the dark years of this war the memorable words of Lord Byron 'Birds have their nests, foxes their caves, Israel but the grave' have echoed and re-echoed in our ears with poignant emphasis. But despite all the heartrending experiences which we have gone through we are not unmindful that our accomplishments till to-day have taken place under the auspices of Great Britain. Would to God that in the words of Dr. Weitzman 'this period of tension should pass very quickly and be forgotten as a bad dream' and our two nations march forward together for our common good, for the good of our Arab kinsmen and the good of the whole of mankind.

It has well been remarked that the Palestine experiment is the one successful thing which has come out of the international scene after the first world war. It is our immovable faith that this has been so because the Zionist experiment from its early beginnings till the present day has been guided by divine providence. Under this providence our dear homeland was guarded from the clutches of the Nazi fiends. The conquest of Palestine by the enemy would have meant the quenching of the

last ember of hope for Israel; and therefore it could not happen. The finger of G-d points clearly and unequivocally to Palestine as the only solution for the Jewish problem. The millions who went to the gas-chambers with the cry of Israel's faith and the song of Zion on their parched lips knew and felt this instinctively. Do not attempt to force back the Hand of Providence ! The words of G-d shall be fulfilled to everlasting. In the words of the Psalmist we declare, 'I shall not die but shall live and recount the deeds of G-d'. We want to live, we shall live here in the Land of Israel, in the spirit of our holy faith, here to work out our historic destiny for the greatest good of all men !

The Jewish people have during the last few years gone through an agony which has no parallel in the history of the world. Six millions of our brothers and sisters and little children among them the finest and best of our people have been exterminated like vermin. One would have thought that after such a holocaust the conscience of the civilised world which did nothing effective to prevent this colossal murder would be aroused to take immediate action of a radical kind in order once and for all to prevent the recurrence of such a catastrophe and ensure the permanent security of the Jewish people. Instead of this, a year has passed, nothing has been done, the survivors are rotting in the camps and living in danger of their lives in more than one country and everywhere Jews feel more insecure, Upon you gentlemen now has been conferred the historic responsibility of taking this decisive step and of once and for all putting to an end to this endless tragedy. I pray that God may send you his light and truth !