

## Sermon delivered by Rabbi Dr. David Weiss on May 25, 1939 / 7 Sivan 5699

*Translated from German by Ernest Guter*

My Devout Friends,

The pleasure which the expression “SHAWUJOTH” instills in us is unfortunately also mixed with overloud dissonances. They are the serious news which did reach us daily for several years from the Holy Land. With bare hand they destroy what our brave Chaluzim have created during several ten year spans, thereby earning the admiration of the total non Jewish world, but also sacrificing their health and even their very lives. Fanatic mentally disturbed individuals torch the harvest of their Jewish neighbors and destroy in flames their farms and homes. They try to evict them from their home base after they had succeeded to flourish the death producing swamp land into a new and splendid life supporting paradise. And even more tragically, people believing to have found a permanent home, to settle in safety had to sacrifice their very own life defending it. This tragedy reaches its summit through the most recent happenings and news which we learned with deepest sorrow, namely that even in the Holy Land immigration for Jews is blocked and entrance is only granted in restricted numbers! This solemn promise given and announced before the whole world was trustlessly broken. Thereby many of our brothers were denied hope for a new life in the land of our fathers.

If we Jews were a nation like all others, then we would have every reason to be discouraged and extremely disappointed. But we are not a nation like all others. We are a very old people with past existence and world remembrance of many thousand years. We have seen empires appear and soon thereafter disappear. We are the oldest observers of the ever changing history of mankind. We are the eternal mankind and therefore judging all happenings, never with the measure of the moment, but always with that of eternity. Using this point of view, we feel grieved in understanding this already long lasting serious situation in which our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land find themselves living in the permanent hope there to find a new permanent home. All this does not at all discourage us.

The Talmud states that God has given the Nation of Israel there magnificent but at the same time sorrowful gifts: (1) the Torah, (2) Eretz Israel and (3) The World Hereafter!

The Torah was preceded by the Egyptian Servitude. Whoever wants to reach the World Hereafter, must first taste in full all suffering in our present world. Even Eretz Israel can only be conquered under sacrifice. Already the Book of Judges at the very beginning of our national history states: Right after Israel finishing sowing, the Midjanites and the Amalachites invaded and conquered Israel and they destroyed all harvest throughout right up to Gaza not leaving any food to support life. Like locusts in huge numbers they swarmed across the land in order to destroy it. The Israelites, totally impoverished, called out to God: “Why did all this happen to us?” God created a savior whom he instructed: “I’m full consciousness of thy power, go and free thy people!”—And so he went and set his people free!

My Devout Friends,

This happening, like in the very beginning, repeats itself like a red thread throughout the whole Jewish History. For over a thousand year span Israel built up on its own base our own culture. Supremely powerful enemies came, pulled down and burned what we had built. Israel walked into captivity with this oath on its lips:

“If I forget you Jerusalem, destruct my right hand!”—Seventy years later Israel returned and rebuilt again. One Hand held a masonry tool and the other a sword. This hard work becomes completed. The Holy city and the Holy Temple are rebuilt and fruitful again are the fields in the Land of Judah. But again comes the time when hostile supreme might pulls down the splendor of Zion and does not leave us anything except one empty (Wailing) Wall. And thereafter Israel creates in all countries, under all cultures, it builds without let-up in all civilizations and always again there arrives the moment when raw hands uncultivated and tear down all we had built up. Then they drive us out of where ever we had our home. And so it remained until to day. But our enemies never could tear down our optimism our hope and our firm belief in our fate determined by God

My Devout Friends, a folk with such a past can raise itself up on such original patterns and will not lose its courage so easily. The constant repetition of building up and tearing down did not weaken us at all. Instead, it forced us to double and to triple our energies. It stiffened our neck, strengthened our character and thereby it enabled us to emerge totally undamaged from all international conflicts.

Based upon all the news which we receive from Eretz Israel, the Jishuv (population) old and new is standing strong and firm. One perceives that the common dangers and the common experiences of the immigrations from so many different locations are being welded together into a single people with a common will. “Not is not the time to weep and to complain, rather now is the time to build!” This is our principal motto.

It answers all happenings. Likewise for years the news besides fear enticed us to: “Organize collections on behalf of the hurt and the survivors, intensify the effort to purchase land and see to it that new people enter the country.” – Many Jews permitted this calling to pass unnoticed. To them we keep announcing it, so that none else may waste their strength and their achievements. We who are observing these happenings from a distance, were also living these anxious and troublesome days beside you. We hope that here the old Jewish optimism will surface again!

It is our task to oppose the uniform will to destruct with a superior will to build-up and to instill into our brothers in the Holy Land the awareness that they are backed up by all Jews everywhere. Our tasks must be despite all other worries to intensively work for Israel so that it will really become that Jewish land for which we Jews have prayed, suffered and bled for many centuries. No difficulty whatsoever could cause us to give up the hope which has been implanted into us in the Torah and by the prophets. – To give up Eretz Israel would disown both our past and our future; it would mean to deny our Jewish soul. The idea of Zion has held the Jews together as a people for two thousand years

Whether by way of messianism, of mysticism or of nationalism, there existed always a central force which constantly unified and bonded us Jews together and directed us to a common objective, while we were dispersed all over the world.

And when Israel might think it could do without Zion and forget Jerusalem, on that day its right hand would rot, its soul dry up and Israel would weaken all through just like our hero Samson did after he lost his hair. Israel would separate into minute parts and be blown into dust by the wind. Zion is our people's heart!

Just like inside of us all blood circulates from the heart and again back to the heart, so our whole Jewish being circulates out from Zion, back to Zion and again out from Zion in an unending stimulating circle for us and for all mankind. Thus from Zion emits the teaching and from Jerusalem the word of God!

The thought of Zion as expressed in the Bible, by the prophets and in the Talmud, is never closely confined nor just a nationalistic idea. Never has the conception of Zion any colouring like European nationalism. The concept "Zion" is greater and more exalted. It is inseparably attached to the Holy Land where it begins and from where its original eternal religious source of strength flows. But its streams much further, flee out of bounds and universal. It will not only encompass Judaism, but indeed all mankind.

Our wise men say that one day Zion will include the whole earth. In fact, Zion already does encompass the whole world. Our Feast of Revelation, which we celebrate today, bears eternal witness that it came from Zion. May Israel live for ever!

AMEN