

ABBA EBAN

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Intellectual Climate  
in  
Israel Today

THE SECOND SACKS LECTURE

OXFORD CENTRE FOR  
POSTGRADUATE HEBREW STUDIES



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## THE INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE IN ISRAEL TODAY

I come here in a mood of piety and kinship. This lecture bears a name that resounds across my life with affection and respect. The Sacks Lecture takes place this year in the shadow of Elsie Sacks' passing. Her serenity flowed from a deep Jewish piety and a dedication to scientific truth and human compassion. Dr. Sammy Sacks is happily amongst us in full vitality of spirit. All families are fortunate that include men with his Jewish values and deep-rooted human ideals. I hope that he will enrich our cultural and communal life in undiminished vigour for many years ahead.

When I was asked about the theme of my address, some intensive negotiation took place with Dr. Sacks and members of the Oxford Centre. I was requested to deal with a subject that went beyond passing event. I was invited to look into distant horizons without disappearing from reality. My theme is "The Intellectual Climate in Israel Today."

Israel is looking more deeply and critically at itself than ever before. It is no longer satisfied with the routine answers to the basic questions of its purpose. It is asking the searching questions about its origins and destination. Above everything else, it is facing the question of its balance of security and survival. Involved in the notion of balance is the question of our national quality. How do we propose to identify and mobilise some dimensions of strength that might enable Israel to hold its own against the immense forces organised for its undoing?

Let us, therefore, look at Israel as it was on 14 May 1948. It was an elite society. Circumstances had conspired to bring about a special emphasis on quality. It lived in a world of ideas. It was relatively homogeneous, since nearly all those who fashioned its life had come out of the traditions of Jewish humanism in Eastern and Central Europe. Its cultural roots were well-defined. On the one hand, there were the ancient memories which had always stirred Jews into an understanding of their particularly. Then there were the traumatic experiences of the holocaust in Europe, together with an almost obsessive devotion to European liberalism. Zionism would not have emerged into reality were there not a general movement at that time favouring the liberation of nations, the break up of empires and the assertion of national identity.

Most of those who pioneered the new Israel society came out of the Shtetl in East Europe where physical squalor went hand in hand with a sense of aristocratic pride. Behind the walls of the ghetto, in conditions of grinding poverty, the Jewish masses of the Russian Empire managed to separate themselves from two surrounding conditions. They separated themselves entirely from their Gentile environment. In this they asserted one of the mysterious qualities of Jewish history — a capacity to form autonomous cells

of existence, in all conditions and environments. And they also separated themselves from their economic conditions, which for the most part were humiliating, parasitical and uncreative. Ignoring the alien environment and the squalor of their lives, they lived in a world of dreams and memories. Their material life might be poor and humiliating; but they were in their own consciousness the descendants of Kings and Prophets. To the contempt in which they were held by the Gentile world, they reacted with a truculent contempt of their own. They succeeded in fashioning a Jewish language, literature, way of life and folk-lore, in total detachment from everything that went on around them. And it was this habit of autonomy that they brought with them to the unpromising and malarial land to which they emigrated. As we read the literature of that period, it seems that our Founding Fathers were so occupied with debate and discussion, that it is extraordinary that they got any work done at all.

But we know their intense intellectual fervour went hand in hand with a harsh and rigorous pioneering effort. They were transforming the nature of the country, and in that transformation, they sought a new vision of themselves. They were also inspired by an instinct for social originality. The established forms of settlement, which are to this day without parallel, expressing ideas of equality and collective solidarity, without any of the enforcement normally associated with communal societies. They divided their tasks into two categories, the possible tasks to which they addressed themselves immediately, and the impossible ones which would simply take a little longer. The most impossible of all their tasks was to rekindle a contact with the Hebrew language and to make it not only the vehicle of their literature, but also the venacular of their speech.

So here they were embarked on efforts which seemed hopelessly unrealistic. It was unrealistic to imagine that a country of that kind, affected by devastation and disease, would ever support a flourishing material or spiritual culture. It was absurd to imagine that a language which had not been used in speech for centuries, could be revived. It was impossible to imagine that so diverse an immigrant society would take on an aspect of coherence. It was ridiculous to conceive that any degree of political autonomy could be achieved. It was wild to imagine that the world community would ever give recognition to this venture. All of these enterprises — wild, improbable, unrealistic and absurd — occupied the Jews of Palestine in the pre-Israeli period. The result was a Utopian society, self-conscious, ecstatic about everything that was new, glad only that it was morning and it was good to be alive, and inspired by an ostrich-like belief in the inherent solubility of all its problems. The intensity of its intellectual climate was exceptional. Above everything else, it was an altruistic society, the citizens of the Yishuv sought their individual satisfaction in a collective enterprise. What mattered was not



the success that the man achieved for himself, but the past that he could play in the success of a society of which he was the creator and the architect. There was also the belief in intellectual values that had inspired Jewish humanism in Eastern Europe. To all this had been added, at Weizmann's initiative, an intuition for what science could do to overcome the unpromising factors of the environment.

The resultant society was strange, eccentric, fascinating for many in the world, infuriating to others by its very bizarre character, and totally lacking of any terms of reference comparable to other societies. This was the community that claimed its independence on 14 May 1948. It did so the clear consciousness that a revolutionary event was being celebrated. That day had significant institutional implications, but it was remarkable chiefly for its effects on Jewish life. Until 1948, from the second century A.D. for nineteen whole centuries, Jewish history had consisted largely of what Jews suffered, endured, resisted, survived, overcame; but not of what Jews themselves determined and created. Now Jewish history had entered a period of autonomy. Henceforward, Jewish history would be very largely what Jews decided that it should be.

The social and cultural realities of Israel today are totally different from those which I have tried to evoke. Four things have happened. First, an enormous quantitative transformation — the original population of 650,000 has multiplied four-fold, enlarged by a new immigrant flood, yet it is the values created by the 650,000 to which men still appeal. The quantitative abundance creates the usual stress between quality and quantity. It is not easy for three million people to maintain the old Utopian and elite level of cultural performance; especially since many of the newcomers came not from an intellectually self-conscious environment as in Eastern Europe, but from countries in which Jews had been cut off from contact with all traditions except their own. In addition, there are now the burdens of Statehood. The old obsession with cultural values, the sense of disembodiment, the lack of responsibility for some of the burdens of political organisations can no longer be afforded. We are now on our own. There is no external protector of our boundaries — the ubiquitous goat had destroyed the forests. The total effect was of a land which seemed to reject human settlement. The first impact of Jewish settlement on the landscape was one of gentle rehabilitation. The early Zionist village was never affluent, but it had a certain rustic harmony and gave an air of rootedness and tranquility. The urban development gave lesser satisfaction. The claims of speed overrode all ambitions of refinement. About the seashore at Tel Aviv as an example of aesthetic concern, it would I think be very kind to draw the thickest kind of veil.

There was also a dreadful illfortune through which the first major impetus in building came in the 1920's and 1930's, when central European domestic

architecture was at its worst. And yet, on total balance, it is still not flattery to describe Israel as a country of many beauties. Israelis, when showing their country to others, which is one of their major pleasures, can point to sharp maritime landscapes, intense concentrations of verdure, the uniquely volcanic grandeur of the ravines between the Dead Sea and Galilee, and some points of scenic climax as on the Sea of Galilee and Jerusalem, more spread out and diverse than in the old paintings and engravings, yet still majestic in its general effect. (I would utter the last sentence with greater conviction, if I had not spent two days at the Jerusalem Hilton Hotel. But not everything is yet spoiled). Yet, the struggle to keep Israel beautiful still has to be waged against a relatively dormant public consciousness. The fact is that Israeli culture is not penetrated by a deep aesthetic impulse. Everything, including physical survival, budget administration, municipal and national government, must be added to the burdens of a community in which the old Mandate exercised many prosaic functions for good or bad. Moreover, there is a degree of affluence, and with it, especially in the '60's and '70's, there came a decline in pioneering values. For the first time we see a tension between the privileged veterans and hard-pressed newcomers. Finally, there is the immense diversity of the new immigrant tide. It is much less homogeneous in its origins than before 1948. There is a convergence from every continent with vast disparities in cultural memories and in scientific levels.

Israel's modern cultural history marks the influence of these intensive changes at work upon an original society. It is inevitable that under such pressures latent tensions should have come to the surface. Israeli society is therefore more turbulent than before, less sure of itself, there is a tendency to ask searching questions, to be sceptical about the routine answers. There is no longer the feeling that external dangers justify inertia or apathy towards domestic intervention. Some observers at home and abroad hold this diversity and turbulence to be a sign of weakness and danger. People are asking: Is Israel losing the special cohesion, discipline and the inner unity which have helped it so far to survive its ideals? Can our adversaries take comfort and hope from the air of rebelliousness and of self-doubt which afflicts the nation as the years go on? Now the question arises in the context of a whole series of "gaps" — that is the favourite word that sociologists use about Israel. The gap between the old inheritance and the new potentiality, between religious belief and scientific rationality. The gap between the settled community and the immigrants. The gap between immigrants from the West and immigrants from the East. The gap between business and labour. The gap between the old pioneering generation and the newcomers born under the Israel sun. We are apparently full of gaps. And yet, with all this ostensible anarchy, there is, I think, an underlying spectacle of coherence. It would be unwise for ourselves and certainly unwise for our adversaries, to exaggerate the significance of

what seem to be elements of fragmentation in Israeli society. The Israeli disposition is to argue fiercely at election time about who should run the nation's affairs, but thereafter to accept decisions with a certain docility. Today, there is an anti-establishment trend which is new and sometimes disconcerting. But on a deeper view, these stirrings can be seen as a sign of vitality, not of disease. Some of the turbulence is exaggerated. The Greek historian said of Athens what he should have said about modern Israel: "This people was born to have no rest itself and to give none to others." But the restlessness is a factor of vitality, not of disease. History shows that those societies are more resilient and durable which are open to the expression of dissent. Israel society tends to have a monolithic aspect only when it faces external danger. Otherwise, it is essentially a diverse organism, recalcitrant to authority and disposed to seek consensus only after lively debate. Yet, the outside world, whether fascinated or irritated by Israel, can still not fail to acknowledge a special quality in its life. Amidst much evidence of nihilism and ferment in contemporary culture, Israel is still a nation in which affirmation counts for more than protest. It is more important to say what you are for than what you are against. It is more important to build than to destroy. And there is one thing which I believe all Israelis understand: It is impossible to renounce innovation. Adventure and decadence are the only choices offered to mankind.

The obsession of world opinion with Israel's political career has tended to diminish the interest and writing devoted to the aesthetic and intellectual and scientific aspects of her performance. I begin with the aesthetic aspect, because it is here that the turbulence of our origins is most in evidence. Israel's rebirth is a constant ecological drama. There are few countries whose literature and rhetoric are so full of concern for a devastated and neglected landscape. Far away in their cold dark ghettos, with never a glimpse of the sun or of anything green or growing, the early Zionists built an idealistic picture of our country's natural beauties. Many of them were in later years to tell how they slept under a clear sky on their first night after landing, and how they met the early dawn as it came up in a riot of yellow and purple radiance. Now this, of course, was not the whole story, or even the greater part of it. The hard truth is that when the early Zionists arrived, the country was not a beautiful thing to behold. No human violence could deprive it of its coastline, of the light playing on the hills, of the immense variety within a compact space of mountain and lowland, of lake and desert, but beyond this, history has done to this landscape all injury of which men are capable.

Zionist pioneers came from places where they were more interested in what things are, than what they looked like. There is more public display of laundered underwear on balconies and rooftops in Israel, than almost anywhere else. Manufacturers of beer, coffee and other admirably exportable

commodities are inclined to outrage by advertising without restraint along the highways. There are problems of pollution on the crowded coastal plain. It is theoretically understood that in Jerusalem aesthetic standards should have a higher place than elsewhere in determining the pace of development. But it is not always possible to put beauty before speed of development. The struggle against ecological carelessness and plain ugliness will have to be joined with full intensity in the next generation. To illustrate, my motive for staying in the Hilton Hotel in Jerusalem is that it is the only place from which it is not possible to see the Hilton Hotel.

Let me add something about the intellectual frontiers within which modern Israel lives. We are no longer talking about an immigrant community. We are talking of a Jewish population of which 60% were born in Israel itself. If we add those who came as small children, we must revise the idea that Israel is predominantly an immigrant society. It is not true today, as it was some years ago, that Israelis are still searching for their roots, or making a conscious transition from one environment to another. Of the minority not born in Israel, about half originated from European countries, and half from countries of Asia and Africa. Israelis of non-European origin have a more prolific birth-rate; but in recent years, through Soviet immigration, the Western component has also grown rapidly. There is a discussion about whether Israel is going to be "European" or "Western" or "Oriental". The fact is that it is not going to be any of these. It is going to be simply "Israel". Some writers, despairing of any Arab reconciliation with a Zionist Israel, draw comfort from the prospect that Israel will become increasingly Orientalised and thus reduce the qualities which separate it from the Middle East. There is no chance of this coming to pass. It is towards the Western norms that Oriental societies converge, not the other way around. Israel's Jewish connections will always be stronger than anything else. It has learnt in 1948, in 1967 and again in 1973, that its survival depends on its science and technology and on its democratic structure. It is the qualities which Israel does not share with its neighbours which enable it to withstand their assault.

This does not mean that Israel is a finished product in terms of its human composition. Every few years, there is a new thread in the tapestry, and the arrival of 100,000 Soviet Jews will set up a new focus of social influence. Their main gift, in addition to a high educational level, is the simple ardour with which they cherish their new freedom. They take a special pride in a Jewish identity which, for many years, was a source of inferior status. There is even a danger of exaggerated reaction. Some are so resentful of the so-called Socialist regime under which they suffered, that they have become hostile even to democratic and voluntary forms of Socialism. Moreover, they come from a country where the Government told every citizen what he had to do. It is not easy for them to face the multiplicity of decisions and of personal

initiatives required from a citizen in a democracy. The total effect of Soviet Jewry, however, is certainly one of reinforcement.

The obsessions with numbers of immigrants is understandable in terms of Israel's historical environment. There is no country which gets up every morning and counts itself with such anxiety day by day. The value attached to each individual gives an enrichment to a small society. It is natural for Israelis to count themselves, calculating the birth-rate and immigration trends, and anxiously asking when their numbers will put the issue of Jewish survival beyond doubt. Another effect of our numerical weakness is to make most of us sceptical about political solutions which will not perpetuate the country's Jewish identity.

Now it is much easier to examine the statistics of Israeli people than to probe its inner world. I said that the outward spectacle is one of anarchic diversity. Some people ask: What is there in common to the youngster born in Yemen and in Russia, to the orthodox youths from East Europe, the banker from Amsterdam, the doctor from London, the scientist from Harvard, the silversmith from Yemen or the lawyer from Egypt or Iran, the small shopkeeper from Morocco or Algeria? What do they have in common? The answer is that whatever they have in common is strong enough to have brought all of them to Israel, and to nowhere else. In other words, it is a society that, despite its pluralism and diversity, has an overriding unity of memory and of consciousness.

The cultural future will be very largely determined by Israel's economic achievement. To the regional and international struggle is now joined an economic theme. There is great concern about Israel's economic future. I think, not as great as it should be. There is a sombre coincidence of two facts — an enormous eruption of Arab self-confidence, pride, and arrogance together with an intensification of Israel's economic deficiencies. The statisticians, of course, can prove that our economic performance has been relatively triumphant. Our exports were forty-six million dollars in 1948 and are nearly three billion dollars today. This rate of growth is without precedent. No other economy — except that of Japan — has shown so steep and constant a rate of growth. Nowhere else in the developing world has an economy passed so quickly from relatively primitive levels to such intense productivity, in agriculture and in industry. There is now a per capita income of something like \$2,800, not \$5,000 as in North America, although our Ministers of Finance and the Governors of the Bank of Israel believe that we are living as though that was our income, but certainly larger than the corresponding figure in many European countries. These are interesting achievements. They would have been more impressive if our people had been willing to accept greater restraints in the standard of living and in the import of consumer goods. Yet, as we look back and forward, there must be an element of concern.

I was last in this city to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of Chaim Weizmann's birth. There has been much diplomatic quotation to celebrate Weizmann's centenary, but very little quotation of his formulation of the economic vision of Zionism. He spoke of the Swiss prototype — small communities with no raw materials which, by developing an intensive use of skilled manpower, have managed to put into the world market sophisticated, expensive commodities. Those who look at Israel's haphazard list of exports cannot really say that this vision has been fulfilled. We do not see the Japanese transistor, or the Swiss watch, or the North European machinery, or enough of electronic products which I think Weizmann was talking about.

The paradox is that science has had much less effect on Israeli industry than it has had upon its defence and its agriculture, although industry is the classical arena in which scientific and technological progress assert themselves. The scientific development of agriculture has reached the highest levels, while the industrial product has not yet reached that level. Whether we can achieve a sophisticated industry depends, of course, on Israel's educational enterprise. Here again, the quantitative expansion is vast. The social role of the educational system has been predominant — the creation of a unified national identity amidst all this diversity is the primary achievement of the education system. And yet, we must admit that it is not easy to keep the target high. There is an anti-intellectual theme in pioneering Zionism. I do not mean to say that the intellectuals in Israel are a repressed minority. Even for working politicians a discreet measure of literacy is no longer a fatal disadvantage. But there is an anti-intellectualism in pioneering Zionism, since the objective was to convert an excessively academised people into a nation distributed into normal categories. Therefore, the hero of the Zionist songs used to be the mathematician or scholar who left his studies to milk a cow on a Zionist farm. Everybody went about boasting about how much he had descended in the level of his academic attainments. There was reason and some method in that concept some decades ago. Today, of course, it would spell ruin for Israel's security and economy. Today a mathematician milking a cow is not pastoral romanticism, but sheer economic waste. Yet, some tendency to revere the non-academic pursuits, to exalt pioneering virility at the expense of intellectual refinement still lingers on.

There has been a scientific ambition in Israel since its earliest days. Many find it startling to come across a small state on the western fringe of Asia, endowed with research reactors, accelerators, computers, laboratories, hospitals, aircraft repair facilities, electronic factories and other indications of scientific progress. At the higher levels of technology and scientific research, Israel celebrates its greatest triumph. There is even a disparity between excellence in the pure sciences and a curious primitiveness in some of the more simple technologies. I experienced this only last week when revisiting the

Weizmann Institute. I was shown accelerators and nuclear reactors and other occult mysteries; but when I tried to put a telephone call through to Jerusalem, I failed. The excellence at the highest levels of technology goes hand in hand with infuriating dislocations at a more mundane level.

But those who founded Israel's scientific tradition, and especially Chaim Weizmann, were not concerned with economic consequences alone. They were concerned with Israel's intellectual levels. The climate of scientific enquiry, its rationality, its capacity for objective judgement, its emphasis on reason and order, its constructive scepticism, and its universal solidarities have all gone deep into the texture of Israeli life. A society in which a family of research workers takes part in a scientific enterprise, is different from a society in which no such family exists. There is another task that the Israeli intellectual community should fulfil. Let us admit that there are very many elements in our culture, history and experience, which tend towards a metaphysical, emotional, passionate attitude. The duty of the intellectual community is to contribute the balancing dimension of rationality.

The agreements that we have been negotiating with the European Economic Communities in the past few years will make the challenge more acute. If we ever break through the Brussels bureaucracy and make the extraordinary transition from initialling the agreement to signing it, and from signing it to ratifying it, within five or six years, the result will not only be that Israel exports will be accepted without customs tax in the nine countries. There is the other side of the coin. Israel will have to abolish the tariffs which protects its industries against the most sophisticated European products.

No reference to the country's intellectual capacity will be complete without a word about the most spectacular adventure of all, the adventure of language. This is not a new synthetic nation, writing its history on a clean slate. The past follows us wherever we go. The revival of Hebrew in daily speech, its steady growth in conceptual precision, a spectacular expansion of vocabulary, notable results in archaeological discovery, the privileged status of biblical tradition, are all symptoms of a profound yearning for continuity. Such institutions as the Heikhal Ha-Sefer, which houses the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Yad Vashem, could not possibly exist anywhere except in Israel. They stand out on Jerusalem's landscape, the one in testimony to Jerusalem's ancient heritage, the other in painful witness of Israel's martyrdom.

The fact is that despite all outward signs of modernity, Israel is still a nation haunted by memories too powerful to efface. Beneath the exuberance and vitality, there is a latent melancholy. The national experience has been tragic, and the concern for eternity breaks out again and again. Now, for this very reason, the Hebrew language is perhaps Israel's most important possession. On the political level it causes immense confusion to our adversaries, who seek to argue that modern Israel has no authentic connection with the Middle East.

The truth is, Israel is the only nation in the world that speaks the same tongue, upholds the same faith, inhabits the same land, as it did three-thousand years ago. The Hebrew language is the birth certificate of a nation in relationship to the land. It also unifies the nation on two levels. It links Jews all over the world in a common legacy; and it joins all of them to Israel of old. In the past twenty-five years, the Israeli nation has not only used the language; it has also enlarged its capacities. Few Israelis are aware of the strides that their new language has taken since the beginning of Statehood. It is not only a question of adding a new vocabulary to meet modern technological concepts. The addition of the vocabulary is not the most important development that has taken place. More significant is the transformation of the language's structure to a point at which no conceptual subtlety or technological sophistication is beyond it.

The Hebrew literary movement, therefore, is a barometer for the understanding of Israel's intellectual life. We find that modern Hebrew literature enacts a drama of conscience, arising out of the Arab frustration and death. It is extraordinary how much modern Hebrew authors are obsessed with the Arab predicament. The new authors were all involved in one or other of the wars, of which they write in sombre memory, usually without any note of glorification. The years 1967-75 are among the greatest periods of florescence in Hebrew poetry. It is concerned with the fundamental facts of existence, with the eternal themes of love and death, which are the two central themes of poetry. But it also undermines the old Zionist dogmatism. It contains an extraordinary self-scrutiny, very much of it tormented and concerned with issues of conscience arising from the fact that over a million Arabs are under Israeli rule.

At a meeting with a group of writers last week, I asked why they should be more concerned than others. The answer was, I think, a correct one. They are simply pioneers of the sensitivities and qualms and torments which are latent in most of us. I will not say that the literary movement is entirely taken up with qualms of conscience. In other extremes it conveys a feverish cry. Every war throws up literary exponents who speak of destiny in a mood of self-righteousness. Suffering, I am afraid, is less likely to generate humility than self-righteousness. Some of our eminent writers are driven by the 1967 victory to ecstasies of national pride. Yet, the dominant atmosphere in the literary movement is one of sobriety and not exaltation. The victory of '67 was absorbed with a balanced understanding both of its opportunities and of its dangers. Now, at the end of a generation, scarred by war and nourished by many triumphs, some of Israel's original values are in doubt. Let me issue the dilemma, by a series of questions: "Will the tolerant human theme in Israeli thought triumph over tendencies of extreme nationalist fervour?" "Will orthodox Jews stretch their imagination to find solutions to urgent human



predicaments without opening a destructive conflict about the special place of religion in Israel's history, a conflict that cannot possibly end in their victory?" "Will the pioneering, collective and humanistic ideals of early Zionism temper the wild rush for affluence and individual wealth so as to maintain a society with a special accent on worth?" "Can Israeli democracy show a better solution than in recent years to the problems of ecological disturbance and the rising crime wave?" "There is a widening social and economic gap between sections of the population. Will intellectual, scientific and artistic excellence be given due preference in Israel's order of priorities? Will the temptations of parochialism and antipathy be overcome by appeal to a Jewish legacy which is universal in space and eternal in time?" Ten years ago, neither I nor anyone else would have asked such questions.

The tension between national particularity and a broad universal vision runs through the whole of Jewish history. There are two tendencies at work — there is the tendency of the Jewish people to curl up in its own shell, to be alone with its own themes and ideas, sharing its speech with nobody else, sharing its faith with no other nation, sharing its memories with no other people, and cultivating a sense of isolation. Yet, on the other hand, the most universal of peoples, in its perception of the human condition, Zionism is a conscious attempt to make Jewish history break out of provincialism and to glow into the social and political experience. The key to Israel's destiny is the relationship between the Israeli present and the Israeli past. The greatest of all disasters would be for modern Israel to cut itself off from its past and to ignore its Jewish context. If Israel is cut off from its history, it will become parochial and sterile. If we live within our geography rather than within Jewish universalisms, we shall lose our major source of enrichment. Whitehead tells us that our mental outlook consists of "ancestral voices prophesying". The business of education is to teach how to inherit and how to bequeath. The greatest danger is of alienation in the new Israeli generation born under our sky and on our soil, immune from tormented realities of Diaspora life. There is a danger that Israelis, very self-confident about their roots, will find themselves alienated from Diaspora Jews, less secure in their temperament, less at peace with their environment, very concerned with the duality of their life, and yet more creative, standing higher in intellectual, artistic and cultural progress. There is a danger of such alienation. It is already "we" and "they", "you" and "I".

There is no longer the same sense of utter identification. I believe that this is one of the great perils. There is no way in which one can construct the vision of Israel holding a balance of security and survival if Israel is restricted to its meagre geography, and to the present age. Israel alone in the Middle East is hopelessly swamped by the enormous demographic, geographic and monetary predominance of its neighbours. Israel, plus the Jewish people, is a

completely different condition; no longer a little Levantine bridgehead, but a universal people marching across unlimited expanses of time and of space. The central issue for Israel's intellectual community, therefore, is whether they can continue to tie Israel to two sources of its strength: to the consciousness of its past, and to the broad concept of a universal House of Israel. One thing is certain. Israel is not going to become absorbed into anything else. It will stand out in its particularity that lies at the root of its political dilemma. It is not just a question of three million Jews living in security. It is a question of the collective identity of the people within the international family. It is on this that we are challenged.

Let me, therefore, conclude with quotations from two humanistic thinkers. One is Alfred North Whitehead: "There is one great reason for the utmost toleration of variety. The differences between the nations and races are necessary to preserve the conditions in which higher development is possible. Men require that their neighbours be sufficiently akin to be understood, sufficiently different to provoke attention, sufficiently great to demand admiration." And if we want to have an understanding of Israel as an essentially intellectual and emotional concept, let us remember Ernest Renan and his definition of nationhood: "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle; a common glory in the past, a common will in the present; to have done great things together; to want to do them again — these are the essential attitudes for the existence of the nation."



